Encounter

January 1976 50p

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Two views of
The English Sickness

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Sand Game

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Douglas Johnson
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Edited by John Wakeman

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John Wakeman, the Editor of *World Authors: 1950–1970* worked in several London libraries and in the Brooklyn Public Library in the 1950s. From 1960 to 1962 he was editor of the *Wilson Library Bulletin*, and has since been a contributor to *The New York Times Book Review, Current Biography, Holiday, Punch, New Statesman, The Times of London, The Observer*, and the *London Magazine*.

Stanley J. Kunitz, who served as Editorial Consultant in the planning of this volume and in the selection of authors, has edited and co-edited other books in the Authors Series. He is a Pulitzer Prize winner in poetry. Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

World Authors: 1950–1970 is the result of ten years of painstaking research, writing and editing. As a comprehensive biographical-critical compendium the book is unique; it will prove invaluable to both students and scholars of twentieth century literature as well as to general readers seeking literary information.

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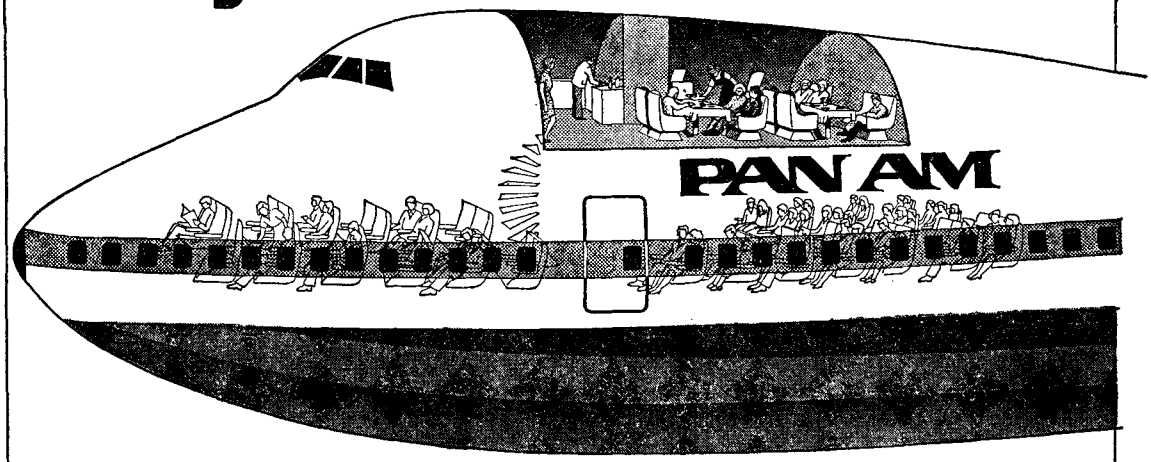

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Miroslav Holub

Sand Game

and Three Poems

THE CORNER *of a park, lined with fragrant jasmine-bushes. A sand-pit, well dug into, centre stage, and behind it a smeared bench of unvarnished wood. Partly hidden by the jasmine, a woodshed, into which one can see through the prised-open door. Inside are shovels, hoes, wheelbarrows, and spilt bags of something or other.*

Seated on the bench is a relatively young white-haired grandpa, wearing a leather jacket and roll-top sweater. He is reading a newspaper, which he holds open in front of him. Occasionally he peers over it.

In the sand-pit relatively big children, Ilona and Robert, are playing. They have built a fairly complicated structure of sand, boards, wire, and dog dung. It reminds one of a rocket launching-site or the gardens of Semiramis.

GRANDPA (*peering over the newspaper*): They say it's going to be very windy and showery. So your fancy tricks'll be blown to kingdom come!

ROBERT: That's not really possible. An anticyclone is moving only above Norway. We are under the influence of considerably high barometric pressure, which is shifting slowly south.

GRANDPA (*nettled*): But it's written here!

ILONA: The structure has adequately firm foundations. We have considered all the parameters. This flange here will withstand a pressure of 50 grammes per square centimetre. The tolerances are considerable.

GRANDPA (*more nettled*): You can't make something out of nothing. It doesn't matter a hoot to me what your to . . . tol . . . tolerances are. There's going to be a real buster. That's what they say here.

ROBERT (*putting on another little piece of wood*): The information flow is often burdened with a considerable hum. It is necessary to relate the general and summary estimate to the concrete system which constitutes only a small segment of reality affected by the information frame. Namely, the microclimatic conditions of this sandpit can be defined only on the basis of physical evidence regarding the maximum parameters of regional formation.

ILONA (*adding a cake of dog manure*): Moreover the essence of the artefact itself changes reality, or rather micro-reality, to the extent that information preceding its creation cannot be fully valid, and therefore true, after it has been created.

ROBERT: The case is analogous to every anagenetic influence under natural conditions, which are never identical in relation to the new object or to themselves, as soon as the object has passed from the sphere of intellectual conception to that of physical realisation.

GRANDPA: You're crazy. Yesterday the sunset was blood-red and the birds were flying low. Here they say that in Ecuador a bridge collapsed. Wait a bit . . . not in Ecuador . . . in . . . what's it called, in Puerto Rico, no, in Malay . . . in Malay . . . no, in Belgium.

ILONA (*to Robert*): Here a few deep injections are needed.

ROBERT (*to Ilona*): Certainly. Otherwise this extension would bring about such stress that, with the given material, we would exceed the original parameters.

GRANDPA (*angrily*): You're crazy. He that mischief hatches, mischief catches. Nothing's going to change that, no matter how many of those parameters you use.

ROBERT (*straightening up, though with the patience proper to his particular age*): In substantial thinking we can certainly relate the value of being, or even the value of its actual statement, to a certain preformed model, in

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relation to which the being or statement appears one way or another insufficient, inadequate, or excessive. In such a case we can make use of verbal comparisons by means of which we release the dissatisfaction or frustration caused by the immanence of the preconceived model in our thinking, however we look at it. . . .

GRANDPA: How crazy can you get!

ILONA: But he is furthermore, and in my opinion rightly, an adherent of non-substantial ontology. . . .

ROBERT (*beginning to walk about and expound in the manner of the Platonic school*): . . . for only in this way can we rise above the rigid structure of old or new anthropological reductionism and reconstruct our world both in regard to its phenomenology and to its freely and operatively substituted existentiality . . .

GRANDPA (*waving his paper*): Oh, go to . . . Here they say . . . .

ROBERT (*with mounting enthusiasm, which results in the appearance of a small flickering and sparkling halo round his head, finally becoming a permanent green glow*): . . . to reconstruct the world in its meaningful comprehensiveness, and this, however, in consciousness of its inner being and consequently from within the field we are trying to understand, but also to a certain degree on the basis of abstracting it from its own participation, on the basis of auto-objectivisation and *ad hoc* derealisation, which of course is in fact the beginning of real and lasting realisation . . .

GRANDPA: You're crazy!

ROBERT (*his head aglow with enthusiasm enters the shed, stumbling over various kinds of bric-à-brac, and is lost from sight*): . . . so that the reconstruction of the world in the system of non-substantial ontology. . . .

From the shed comes an explosion, with pieces of flying wood and clouds of dirty black smoke. Ilona sits down on the sand construction, squashing it. Grandpa jumps up, shielding his head with the newspaper. When the noise and smoke subside, a shaken Robert, now without his halo, creeps out of the shed.

GRANDPA (*triumphantly*): See how crazy you are!

Successful young man in the labyrinth

When he had made his eighth turn
he cleared his throat and shouted:
Minotaur, have some sense. I give
you my word, show me the way out
and I'll get you a score of lovelies.
It's a cinch, Minotaur.

Out of sight, I replied:
I wonder if you know that there are
demons?
Stuff it,
he answered, don't be crazy. Believe me,
I know where you can make a fantastic pile,
fifty-fifty, it's a cinch, okay?
I'm just a normal chap,
be normal, Minotaur!

I replied:
Do you happen to know that normality
is merely a milder form
of imbecility?

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Stuff it,
he shouted, don't you understand it pays
to get along with people? Working with people,
that's what pays, our sergeant used to say
as he powdered our quarters
against the bed bugs, so why be stuck up?
Here you can't raise enough to buy the baby a
new bib.

I said:
Don't you realise you live
on the point of a needle that is patching
the threadbare pants of your history?
And what is your real aim,
son?
That's the ticket,
he answered. Aim . . . I think
it's to get back. To be in the money.
And right now I'd like a copy of this labyrinth,
might come in handy,
if you take it realistically. . . .

Then I gave him to the demons
to be thrown out.
And I had the passages treated
with that powder.

No doubt he lived a long life
and made a name for himself
in greyhound racing.

Sisyphus

Unable to roll the stone into place,
stone, whatever it was, maybe gneiss, or paper,
I judged the fault was in me.
The main thing about faults is that they can be
corrected,
Mother used to say.

I judged the fault was in me.
And added as much again
to the stone's weight. Whatever it was,
maybe hate, or love.
And immediately things went better. For

there was the certainty
that eventually
it would break my neck.

Clowns

Where do clowns go,
What do clowns eat,
Where do clowns sleep,
What do clowns do,
when nobody,
just nobody laughs
any more,
Mummy?

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Henry Fairlie

Transatlantic Letter to England

Thoughts of Home at Midnight

England
with its baby rivers and little towns, each with its abbey or its cathedral,
with voices—one voice perhaps, echoing through the transept—the
criterion of suitability and convenience. . . .

AND THAT, in the words of the American poet, Marianne Moore, is one way in which it is most pleasant to think of it in my absence, until a spurt of irritation runs in my veins and I would like to damn—or dam—all those baby rivers, and blow a raspberry in the transept.

For the picture is no longer very convincing, as I read the newspapers and journals from England, and listen to the messages that are borne to me by the friends who manage to find me among the foothills of the Rocky Mountains or in the Hill County of Texas. The "criterion of suitability and convenience"?—it really does not sound like it any more. The "voices in the transept"?—it is hard to hear them above the shouts of protest and the explosion of bombs. And the "one voice perhaps"—the voice that was recognisably England's?[1]—how querulous it has become on the one hand, and on the other how quarrelsome: a voice that seems now to be nerveless or strident, as often as not both, as if the country is "Ending Up" as nastily as the old people in Kingsley Amis's novel.

Perhaps both pictures are misleading, the one of the past, the other of the present; and perhaps my own reflections are based on a false impression of what has happened in my absence. But even if that were true, they might still have some value. The "character of England" used to be the subject that engrossed some of us; it is the subject of these home thoughts from abroad. My impressions of that character have changed, partly as a result of my now lengthy acquaintance with a country whose character is wholly different from the character of England, and partly as a response to the inability of Britain to cope with the problems of its decline. It is my own changes of attitude, therefore, that are to some extent my subject.

FOR ONE THING, my experiences in the past ten years have forced me to consider more deeply than before the whole question of national character. The idea of national character has often been disparaged, and as often romanticised. Yet it is absurd to deny that, in its vast territory, and out of the astonishing diversity of its peoples, the United States has formed a national character, which may be recognised from Boston to Los Angeles, and from Seattle to Miami. There is so obviously such a thing as an American, his character formed in the modern age, that it makes it easier to claim that there is such a thing as the character of the Englishman, formed out of what Hugh Gaitskell called "a thousand years of history."

Moreover, with their emphasis on the characteristics of different "cultures", both sociology and anthropology have given more precision to the ways in which we can think of national character; and the complex studies of linguistics have reinforced the previously uncertain assumptions about the importance of national languages. The whole idea of national character, in short, seems ready to be brought out of the mists by which it has far too long been surrounded, but that is the subject for another occasion. At the moment, I wish merely to defend the idea that the "character of England" is something that exists; and that it is a subject that has been too idly discussed in the debates about Britain's place in the world today.

[1] I do not wish to seem to be guilty of any confusion. When I talk of "Britain", I will mean the political unit, the United Kingdom; when of "England", I will mean primarily, if not only, English society.

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IN ONE OF THE RARE interviews which he gave about his personal life, W. H. Auden was asked why he divided his years between Manhattan and Austria, and did not spend part of them in England. "Oh! that would be like living all one's life with one's family", he answered, and he of course returned to England's family, in the end, only to be "looked after" in his old age; and, too soon, to die. One evening in Houston, when I was answering the question that Americans often put to me—why I *like* to live in America—I gave the answer, surprising at first, "Because it is the first time in my life that I have felt free", and I went on to explain—not then knowing of Auden's reply—that one of the things of which I felt free was the strength of the *family-ness* of England, what had once seemed to me to be one of the most attractive of its features.

The charm and the strength of this family-ness seem from a distance to be as appealing and (at first) as reassuring as ever. It is nice to know the family history; to feel that everyone whom one meets is a relation, and that one can tell from what branch of the family he comes; to stick one's life in the family album, and turn over the pages now and then; and especially nice to believe that, in a crisis, the family will rally round with its small boats to the rescue. Of course one misses it; but I do not miss in it what is suffocating, and I have come more and more to believe that England is a country that is suffocated, more today than in the past, by its sense of its own family-ness.

During my earlier years in the United States, I used to complain to my American friends, "But you have no niches"; and I missed the niches that the family-ness of England provides for the individual, for the lame and the eccentric, the "poor relations" and the "mad relations." And there is no doubt that, *on the surface*, America is in this respect a much crueller society. But I have grown to realise that the figures in those niches in England are very still. They are set in the walls of the transept, and they do not move; dusted now and then by the vergers, there they stay for their lives, and there for centuries they have stayed, the "poor relations" and the "mad relations", and perhaps not them alone, but also the "normal relations", as they are thought to be, who have committed them.

THE TOLERANCE OF ENGLISH LIFE, the civility that used to be boasted, seems to be that of figures as immobile as those on the tombs in Westminster Abbey (as often as not behind grilles of iron), the hands pressed together over their chests, the feet resting against a faithful hound. This is what I mean by the family-ness: the immobility of the individuals and therefore of the society; everyone in his or her own place; everyone doing and saying and being what he or she has always done and said and been. I have the fearful premonition, for it is not what I would wish, that England may before long become one vast run-down cathedral, the whole family set in its walls, stiff and still, the signs of activity no more than the stirring of the dust as the vergers pass down the transepts to count the figures, for neither will they change nor will they increase. The font will always be empty.

Moreover, in its decline, the family has a limitless resource to buttress the sense of its family-ness. It can reach for the family album, pull out the family tree, fall back on the richness of its own history. I happen to believe that few countries in the world have had a more magnificent or rewarding past than has England. I cannot imagine, in fact, what it would have been like to have been reared in a country that had not enjoyed it; and it is not irrelevant that its history has been reflected in its literature in a way that has been particularly its own, so that with the greatness of its literature one has drunk also of the greatness of its history. But can one live, can the country live, by trying to relive it? From this distance, the interest that the English are today taking in their past seems, not merely eccentric, but lunatic.

THE ENGLISH HAVE ALWAYS written their history well, which is one reason why it seems even more magnificent than it has been. But they are never satisfied; they must go on telling their own story. There seems now to be not a war that is not being waged once more, in print or on television, not a battle that is not being re-fought, not a sovereign who is not being annointed with a biography, not a politician whose life is not being celebrated, not a period that is not being glamourised, not a corner of what, for a time, was England that is not being re-tilled. Every young writer in England seems to be like Old Kaspar, not even re-telling his own battles but those of his ancestors. "There are no good brave causes left", cried Jimmy Porter all those years—and years—ago at the Royal Court; all right, then, we will revive all the good brave causes of the past, Roundheads *v.* Cavaliers, Mary Queen of Scots *v.* Queen Elizabeth, even Henry VIII *v.* His Wives.

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At its most insidious, this reinforcement of the family-ness takes the form of biographies. There can be no country that writes and reads so many biographies as do the English. The danger is obvious. Since the individual life can always be vindicated—and vindication is one of the tasks of the biographer—the historical failure of the nation can be conveniently overlooked. Biographise the past—the task to which so much of the popularising literary energy of the country seems to be devoted at the moment—and it becomes a story of personal achievement and adventure, even if these end in failure, a series of romances that buttresses, as it is intended to buttress, the sense of family-ness. And if there is family gossip, all the better; as if his journals reveal that W. E. Gladstone ran away with Harold Pinter.

Moreover, biography is necessarily the story mainly of top people, of sovereigns and rulers, in short, of the governing class; and, since it is the task of biography to vindicate, the governing class is vindicated. Yet, for a hundred years at least, the record of the governing class in England—look simply at its handling of the Irish question, whatever the excuses that are available—has been one of all but unmitigated disaster. Nowhere was the decline of the governing class more exquisitely demonstrated than in the Bloomsbury Group, yet its goings on—do they deserve to be more dignified?—are now being celebrated as if it had once been Holland House (and come to think of it, isn't it time for a new racy account of the Comprehensive School of the Grand Whiggery?).

There is no more pathetic story of the Bloomsbury Group, and of its connivance in the misgovernment of Britain, than the story of J. M. Keynes—that master-mind of temporary improvisations for rescuing the ruling class—after he had negotiated the humiliating terms of the first loan that Britain accepted from America after the Second World War. On a night train in the United States, he reeled down the corridor to have breakfast, until he had to be carried into a compartment, as exhausted and almost as paralysed as the country whose interests he and his circle had regarded with so nervous a sensibility where these affected their own concerns, and so unpardonable a lack of seriousness where they touched the long-term welfare of the people. Yet people still write of Keynes as if it would be indecent to question his whole attitude and influence; and beyond him the celebration of the Bloomsbury Group has become a weekend cottage industry in the literary reviews. I once said in ENCOUNTER that it seemed as if every generation of Englishmen must have its own biography of Monckton Milne; now it seems that every generation will have its life of Lytton Strachey, or even more exquisitely of J. R. Ackerley. Even in its decline, the governing class will celebrate its own, and with at least some sense of appropriateness it chooses a reclining figure.

When he first sailed to America, Cyril Connolly said that England seemed day by day to grow more remote, and that he felt as if he had left a week-end cottage, where the washing-up was undone. And there, the washing-up still undone, the family seems from this distance to be huddled over the family-tree, ooh-ing and ah-ing at the top members, gratefully escaping from the spare indignities of today into the pageant of "vanished supremacies."

LET US TRY another approach. What is now wrong with British politics? In February of 1974, I listened to the results of the British general election with a number of other British expatriates, on a short-wave radio in Boulder, Colorado. We were a mixed bunch, from Sir John Fletcher-Cooke—who once served his sovereign by assisting in the dissolution of her Empire, and was at the time lecturing to American blacks about their African heritage—to a graduate student and teaching assistant in sociology, the son of a Salvation Army officer. Apart from Sir John—who sat through the long night like the deputy governor of a non-existent colony, waiting for the bugle to call, when he would haul down the flag at sunset—we were a rather raggedly bunch of colonials, not one of us who could not have been played by Alec Guinness with that seedy dignity with which he has caught the atmosphere of post-imperial Britain.

We repeated the occasion the following October, except that Sir John was no longer with us; but the mood had changed strikingly in eight months. In February we had all, whatever our party feelings, shared an earnest desire that Britain should have a strong government, preferably led by Harold Wilson, if only because Edward Heath had just had his chance, and had flipped and flapped and flopped for four years. But eight months later, still with our six-packs of Watney's to sustain us through the night, we found it difficult to hope; even to be very serious

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about the results, even to listen at all. As the sun moved westward on its course, the crackling on the short-wave radio grew less, and familar voices drifted in and out of our conversation: Ronald Butt analysing the new Parliamentary situation as if he were reporting to Queen Victoria on the re-election of Lord John Russell, and Robin Day still earnestly quizzing each politician dragged into the studio for him. What was it all about? None of us could answer.

What is more, I believe that our mood, some 5,000 miles from the Savoy Hotel, was not very different from that in Britain itself; or so my messengers from London tell me. There is something very sad in this: more than a loss of power or a decline of wealth; in fact, an evaporation of relevance. Even contrasted with a mere decade ago, when I first visited the United States, it is now difficult to find here anyone who cares what Britain says or does. This is new. Ten years ago a British general election was not regarded as a mock battle on Tom Tiddler's Ground, which was how *The Economist* presumed that the general election of February 1974 was regarded abroad. There is blame to be placed on Edward Heath and Harold Wilson, but it is necessary first to look wider afield. What is wrong with British politics? The answer cannot be found by looking only to Westminster; it lies partly in the "political culture" of the country.

BRITAIN NEEDS TO RECOVER the habits of rigorous intellectual debate in the conduct of its public life. In much of my political journalism in Britian, I used to be at war with the idea that the tolerance and congeniality, indeed the endurance, of English society have been due to the "unintellectual" and "un-ideological" nature of its public life, in general, and of its political life, in particular. In what I believe was the first article I ever contributed to ENCOUNTER some two decades ago, I debated with Roy Jenkins—our pieces were run together—whether the British (the English?) had a "genius for compromise." Supposedly a Socialist, he said "Yes!"; supposedly a Conservative, I said "No!" My trouble with him then, and now, is that he seemed to start, and to expect us all to start from ground on which the opposing sides were so alike, politically and intellectually, that in fact there was no need for any compromise, whether or not the British had a genius for it. He called his book on the House of Lords *Mr Balfour's Poodle*; but there are times, when I try to discover what he believes, when I wish to address to him Pope's famous lines:

> *I am His Highness's dog at Kew;*
> *Pray tell me, Sir, whose dog are you?*

I do not mean this personally, but politically and intellectually. I can find no reason why Mr Jenkins should be in the Labour Party; but equally I can find no reason why he should be in the Conservative Party.

The notion that English society has been unintellectual and unideological is a falsehood. Whenever the country has been true to the instruction of its own spirit, its public life has been informed by intellectual debate of exceptional rigour. This was especially true in those two mighty ages of England, the Elizabethan (continuing into the political debates of the 17th century) and the Victorian. The public mind was vitalised by its intellectual mind. In fact, it was one of the functions of the politician and the publicist to be vehicles by which the intellectual mind of the country was carried, popularised but not vulgarised, into its public mind, there to exacerbate and drill it.

THE TWO GREAT PARTIES in the 19th century both had an intellectual force, and so in its origins did the Labour Party. It was partly by this force that they were able to engage an electorate that was less well educated than that of today. The weightiness of English political literature was remarkable, and it informed the political struggles of the day as it also reflected them. Even the cultural criticism of a Matthew Arnold or a John Ruskin had some connection with the immediate issues that were being debated in the House of Commons, or, for that matter, the House of Lords.

The notion that English society and politics have been less intellectual and ideological than those, say, of France has persisted, not because it is true, but because the opposite has been true: that the intellectual and political life of the country have been naturally and continually in correspondence, and it is this that has evaporated. In my own lifetime, an era seems to have vanished, in which the intellect was a recognisable force in British politics, which not only elevated the public life of the country, and the minds of the politicians, but which made the people realise that they were taking part in a debate that mattered beyond the consideration of their own immediate and personal interests. In the 19th century, one knew the intellectual standpoint not

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only of the great reviews—the *Quarterly* and the *Edinburgh* and the *Westminster*—but even of the *Economist*; but today the *Economist* says nothing that might not be said by a small shopkeeper. In fact, it says less: a shopkeeper in defence of his own interests might advance an argument which had to be met with some intelligence, but week by week one picks up the *Economist* and puts it down an hour later wondering what it has said, what it thinks.

In this it represents the politicians. However one rates the intelligence of Harold Wilson and Edward Heath, who have governed the country in the past ten years, each has reduced his mind to the level at which he believes that the public mind can most easily be manipulated; and the public mind in response, as it seems from this distance, slithers further into slovenliness and petulance. It is not being asked to be serious, in the way in which John Bright and Richard Cobden, for example, inspired the cotton workers of Lancashire to act against their immediate interests —to endure a long period of unemployment— because it was *more seriously* in their interests, in the interests of any democracy, to support the North in the American Civil War. It was not just a moral force that was brought to bear—as again by Gladstone on the Armenian question or on Irish home rule—but a moral force that grew out of the sustained intellectual life of the nation.

THE INTELLECTUAL RIGOUR of the public life of the country was one way in which it was rescued from its suffocating family-ness. But before we return to it, there is a second of these graces to be considered.

Britain is missionary—or it is nothing. It is an exemplar—or it is nothing. It has in the past saved itself from the cosiness and sterility of its island family-ness by spreading that family far and wide. That may no longer be its mission and its opening. But there can be no Britain if it does not set out, generation after generation, to teach the rest of the world. Indeed, if it is true to itself, it has no choice. For it is not a question of Empire, if one thinks of that only in terms of the imperialism of the second half of the 19th century. It is a question of Empire in the sense that the Bishop of Avila stepped forward to urge on Queen Isabella a Castilian grammar, the first grammar of a modern language in Europe, with the serpent words, "Your majesty, language is the perfect instrument of Empire": an argument which immediately she found persuasive.

AMERICAN ENGLISH is fast becoming the *lingua franca* of the world. In no way are Russian or Chinese going to become the world languages of the future. American English is already the first universal language of the globe, and this must be an English concern. It has a meaning; and although that meaning is easier to grasp in the United States, whose own idea is being carried to the world with the traffic of its arms and its commerce, as well as in its language, England is the mother of that language and, if it cares for it, must care also about the instructions carried in it. Because most of mankind wants or needs what is American, it learns to speak American English; speaking American English, it learns further to want what is American. To a large extent, we think and act as the words that we use teach and enable us to think and act; our words use us as much as we use them; and the command of American English in the world today gives to American civilisation a sway that is not easily resisted, and in which England must have a particular interest.

After the meetings at Helsinki, the *New Statesman* commented on the visit of the British Foreign Secretary to Poland that it was:

> the most hopeful recent sign that times are changing—above all, that we have recognised, and are at last beginning to accept, our status as a second-class power. . . . There are worse roles . . . and it is one which we are ideally suited to play
> (25 July 1975)

But even if this were true in the political and economic terms that the *New Statesman* means, one wonders what the exchange would then be between the English language and the Polish language—English literature and Polish literature —English ideas and Polish ideas. "We have nothing to lose and everything to gain", the *New Statesman* went on, "by aligning ourselves with the smaller nations." But what would the English language then be used to say; and how quickly deaf would England itself become to what was being said in American English, which is now the most vital expression of its own tongue?

One feels in this vision of the future a confinement of Britain to its own backyard that is unnecessary and would suffocate still more. I find something disturbing, for example, in the lack of sympathetic concern in Britain now for the countries that were once its "Anglo-Saxon" settlements. Although they will bridle at my

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words if they choose to misunderstand them, it is Canada and Australia, New Zealand and South Africa that seem in many ways to be the "underdeveloped" nations of the Commonwealth; yet Britain shows little interest in them. The mystery of Canada's backwardness—and it *is* backward when contrasted with its neighbour—is something that the Englishman in North America is bound to contemplate. It cannot be explained only in terms of resources; and as the Englishman puts his question to the Canadians whom he meets, he cannot ignore how often they reach in the end the same answer: "Because we have had a monarchy all this time—the Americans got rid of it *in time*." And that answer must make the Englishman think in turn of his own country, and its own perhaps lost possibilities.

But even more important, of course, is that Britain should have a more confident and alert, less defensive and myopic appreciation of its association with the greatest of its "Anglo-Saxon" settlements, the United States, which today stands, as Julián Marías once put it, "at the prow of our civilisation"; and this has nothing to do with a "special relationship" in the political sense. It is simply this: for the mother of the English language to neglect or diminish its sense of association with the country that has created from it American English—the most inventive and vivid language in the world today, apart from its being the *lingua franca*—is to reinforce the cosiness of its own family-ness. The effects may already be seen in an English literature which today has the "tone"—and how seductive that term is—of a parish newsletter.

"But we are turned out to Europe now", it will be said. This is a deception. "England always takes continental diseases mildly", Balfour said; and we may be grateful for the fact. But a mild influence from and on Europe is the last thing that Britain needs. Moreover, England and Europe are in the same boat: heirs of a European civilisation that is now, within itself, without purpose or destiny. "I am not sure", wrote Matthew Arnold to his eldest sister in 1848, "but I agree in Lamartine's prophecy that a hundred years hence the Continent will be a great united Federal Republic, and England, all her colonies gone, in a dull steady decay."[2] But the trouble with that prophecy, reading it today, is that the first intimations of that "united Federal Republic" on the Continent do not suggest the kind of greatness of which he was talking. Europe is saying very little to the world that the world needs to hear; and England alone has at its command the language that can open it again to the world, and to the forces that are agitating and making it.

IN AN HONEST BOOK that deserved more attention, Martin Green said: "One of the characteristically ironic and corrosive" results of being born in England these days is that

> one can earn a living anywhere in the world merely by teaching people to speak the language he has as a birthright. . . .

but he is

> Jacob pretending to be Esau. It's American English the Turks and the Danes want, but they would rather learn the language from an Oxonian than from an American because his accent is so much better. This is the apotheosis of shabby gentility—the impoverished older branch living off its relationship to the reigning house and sneering at their vulgarity as they do so[3]

And there is much in what he says. But if England, as he himself agrees, had a much more confident and therefore active and creative sense of its association with the most imperious language in the world today, its role could be quite different.

FOR IT IS AT THIS POINT that all the points that I have so far been making can be seen to connect. What I am most aware of in the public life of the country at the moment—and it is perhaps one's absence that enables one to feel this so keenly—is *a radical failure to conceptualise or discuss its problems in terms that are relevant to the rest of the world, even when the rest of the world shares its problems.* The most obvious example is how parochial, from this distance, the decisions to enter and remain in the Common Market seemed to be. No one in America really took any notice. It was regarded as a fussy little debate of imperceptible consequences to anyone, just the kind of debate in which Britain seems determined to occupy itself.

If it was as momentous an issue as the politicians and the publicists made it out to be, why was the debate so parochial that no one in America whom I know—not even the oil bankers and the

[2] *The Works of Matthew Arnold*, (London, 1903–04, repr. New York, 1970), vol. XIII, p. 11.
[3] Martin Green, *A Mirror for Anglo-Saxons* (1961), p. 147.

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oil barons of my acquaintance in Houston, who have some immediate interest in Britain—once lifted his head to take a more than passing notice?

It is not difficult to envisage how the debate could have reverberated across the world. The holding of a popular referendum, for example, was not just a "shoddy expedient", as it was at first described by *The Economist* (which then was simply glad that its own side won). It was the introduction into the working of the British political system of an idea that is radically alien to it. One would have expected such a proposal to engender a fury of political debate, which would have expanded into an intellectual debate, and which would then have reached beyond the boundaries of the country. But, although it alone profoundly mattered, and certainly mattered more than the actual result, the constitutional issue was never to the fore.

At the beginning of this century, a scholar such as A. V. Dicey would have been in the public arena, breathing his anathemas, as he did in his own day, and energising and influencing the course of the debate. But the only hint today that such a debate might be possible was given by John Mackintosh on his election to Parliament, when he announced that he would vote against the holding of a referendum; and even then the debate on this aspect did not happen, it was never more than marginal and bland. Only the result of the referendum was in the end held to matter; and it should be cut into the walls of Westminster that not one leader of the three parliamentary parties in Britain in the 1970s could be found to defend the parliamentary system of the Mother of Parliaments.

For the issue that was raised by the referendum is world-wide in its suggestiveness. Who shall rule, and how? Who shall rule Britain—who shall rule America—and, one may forcibly add, who shall rule India—and how? It is no less than the great issue of representation, not *versus* democracy, but *in* a democracy. It is the representative element that has been radically weakened in Britain and America in the past century; and when one gazes on the dismal course of events in India, what is at the root of them but a form of democracy that has been passed on in which the representative element has *ab initio* been weak?

Does no one read Hume in England any longer? Is there no Englishman now willing to teach the world to read him—or Burke? The country that more intelligently than any other has in the past faced the question of the representation of special interests could have spoken its own truths. Not only on the question of the corporations, but also on the question of the unions; for it seems to me that today the trade unions are under-represented in the political system in Britain—a point to which I will come.

ALL OF THESE, AGAIN, are subjects that are relevant to the rest of the world, touching on the universal fear that great corporations and great unions will, outside the supposed political system of any country, simply carve up the political demesne. The nature of the power of the "Imperial Presidency" in America and of Mrs Indira Gandhi in India—the weakness of the representative bodies in both countries—is directly related to the direct appeal to the people on a single issue which Harold Wilson was allowed to make in the referendum. The more that direct appeals to the people are made by prime ministers and presidents, the weaker become the protections that a parliament or a congress are meant to provide. At this level, the country of the Mother of Parliaments could have conducted a debate that would have affected the world, and lifted its own eyes beyond the boundaries of its parish. It is, after all, a terrifying thought that Harold Wilson was, by a direct appeal to the people, able to defeat every representative organ in the Labour Party; and that *is* an event that is linked to Watergate in the United States, and to the sad experiments in democracy in the "Third World."

TO TAKE ANOTHER EXAMPLE: when I read a report in a British newspaper of the "colour problem" in Britain, I think that it ought to be on the sports pages, because it might as well be an account of a cricket match with the West Indians or the Pakistanis. It is debated as a family affair, as if it is a local question of the preservation of English society, of no consequence to the world. "You look after your niggers, and we'll look after ours", was the reply which Walter Lippmann told me Randolph Churchill had once given him, when he raised the question of Britain's relations with its colonies in Africa. And there is still something "colonial" in precisely this way about the British handling and discussion of its own "colour problem." One has the impression that one day Britain will announce that it has solved the problem in its own distinctive way by giving some special "colonial status" to the

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coloured communities in its cities, even allowing them to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference.

In two ways, the voice of England has been silent on this issue; at least, I know no one who from this distance has heard it. There is no doubt, for example, that by trial and error, and in ways that were not and still have not been envisaged, the United States is on the way to creating the first genuinely "multi-racial" society in the world. Gaze around the world, and where else does one expect that experiment to be repeated, except in Britain? And if it created such a society within its own borders, would it not be the fit culmination of its imperial venture: helping to create in time, as even the United States is less well-placed to do, the possibility of "multi-racial" societies in reverse, in the "coloured" countries, as well as in the "white"? One does not require a *programme* to justify such a vision; it is the vision itself that can enable the country to think beyond its own boundaries and to think far ahead.

Secondly, it was out of the (as they were then called) Negro movements in the United States that there sprang the whole notion of "liberation", as the word is now used, and hence all the "liberation" movements that have since emerged. There is much to be questioned in the idea of "liberation"; but I have no doubt that it is one of the coded words of our time, which we have yet to decipher: that just as it has grown from the redefinitions of individual human nature in which our science and our art have been engaged for two centuries, so it will significantly alter the relationship of the individual to his society. It is an idea, therefore, of political importance which should be debated with intellectual strenuousness. But, although the liberation movements have spread from America to England, I am not aware of more than a peep from England that has contributed anything of significance to the debate. As with the "colour problem", the debate about Women's Liberation seems to me to take place inside a family, in the same colonial terms; and I have the feeling that the problems that Germaine Greer encounters are not those of being a woman, but those of being an Australian.

YET AGAIN, TAKE the greatest issue of the day throughout the world: the "passion for equality", as it has been called, and therefore the attempts to redefine it, and then to discover its limits. This is an issue on which the public mind of England has in the past spoken, whether in favour of or against more equality, with clarity and instruction. What other country in the world gave so early and so strong an initial push to the "levelling principle", thereafter to try to work out, intellectually and politically, its meaning and its applications? Yet it is from the Department of Philosophy at Harvard that there has come the massive statement of John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*, and from the same Department that there has come as massive a response in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* by Robert Nozick. And who is the enemy against whom Rawls trains his main guns, but the English Utilitarians; and who is the political philosopher from whom Nozick starts, to whom constantly to return, but the Englishman John Locke? Either way, the inspiration is there, in English political philosophy, to support either side, yet in so far as an English voice has yet contributed to the debate, it has been as a commentary on the two Americans.[4]

One has to ask why the really good voices in England today are so muted that one must bend to hear their warbles as if trying to catch a note that is pitched too high for the ordinary ear. Why is it that, taken together, their voices sound like a chorus of crickets? Why is it that a mind as good and searching as—let me say, intending it as a compliment—Stuart Hampshire's seems too often to be chirping on the margins of a great issue, even when there is a hint, always just the hint, that he has something large to say? Why is it that he has just helped to edit a collection of essays on the future of socialism in which the contributors seem to have been invited to speak at a garden party; so that, when one puts it down, one feels that one has been fed a few delicate cucumber sandwiches and not listened to a debate on a great political idea? The intellectual mind of England at the moment seems to carry on its debates with all the strenuousness that one associated with afternoon tea at Brown's Hotel.

AND THIS AFFECTS the political mind of the country. As I was considering this article, I picked up a collection of Doris Lessing's essays,

[4] If proof is needed of what I am saying, one need look only at one of the best anti-egalitarian essays in recent years: Samuel Brittan's "The Economic Contradictions of Democracy", in the *British Journal of Political Science* (April 1975). His argument is dominated by the attention that he feels he must give to American writers, including of course John Rawls.

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which includes her contribution to *Declaration* in 1957.[5] How curious to think that there must be a whole generation of writers in England today who do not know what *Declaration* was or, rather, what it was meant to be: the "manifesto" of the new "intellectual" Left in Britain, of the "Angry Young Men", published a year after the fiasco at Suez. I criticised it in *Tribune* at the time, in an exchange with Kenneth Tynan, in which I said that many of the contributors, self-proclaimed as Socialists, seemed to me to be more right-wing than I, self-proclaimed as a Conservative: and one need only go back to the volume to see how far I was correct. But this was not what I said at the time of Doris Lessing, and it is not my interest now in her still pointed and moving essay.

Of the "Angry Young Men", she said (what no one almost twenty years later will deny):

> "Yet they are extremely provincial and I do not mean by provincial that they come from or write about the provinces. I mean that their horizons are bounded by their immediate experience of British life and standards."

But only the sentence before she had written that their work was

> "like an injection of vitality into the withered arm of British literature. It expresses something new; a section of the intelligentsia who are scornful of middle-class values; reject The Establishment; are refreshingly derisive and are not prepared to be bullied by phrases like 'good taste'."

What is interesting is how she thought she could say both things simultaneously.

For what did the authors of *Declaration* accomplish with their shot in the arm? After a strenuous fight against the English class system, they made it possible for the Players to leave and enter the pavilion at Lord's by the same gate as the Gentlemen; and there the list seems to stop. Oh, yes! perhaps it could be claimed that they helped to make it possible for four genteel undergraduates from Cambridge to put on a genteel show in the West End that was acclaimed as *satire*. (How did anyone think—and, again, I asked this at the time—that Jonathan Miller and Peter Cook, Alan Bennett and Dudley Moore were satirists? They were about as biting as *Goodbye Mr Chips*.) And again, oh, yes! they perhaps encouraged the B.B.C. to put on a programme, again said to be satirical, compered by that Robespierre of television, David Frost. Altogether, one can only stand in awe before such a twenty-year record of dynamic revolutionary achievement by the new "section of the intelligentsia"; as the phrase goes, it blows the mind.

Where was the "injection of vitality"? Doris Lessing was much nearer that truth in her second opinion. It was all provincial. It was all genteel. What could have been more genteel than the "working-class" drama of Arnold Wesker at the time? It had hardly as much revolutionary force as *How Green Was My Valley*. And what of the work of Lindsay Anderson in the same period, again seen as part of some "New Left" upsurge of revolutionary culture? It was in fact mincing in its voice, and in its gait. The vehemence with which much of it all was expressed was artificial—one remembers John Osborne's own comment on Jimmy Porter, "To be as vehement as he is, is to be almost noncommittal"—and it was the pretence to anger that angered some of us in response. For the same pretence is there today. From this distance, one of the main endeavours of "the Left" in England in recent years seems to have been to tear up Lord's cricket ground, or the rugby field at Twickenham, if the South Africans have been meant to play. What a famous victory: to prevent a cricket eleven from hitting, or a rugby fifteen from passing, a ball!

IT IS WORTH GOING BACK to this time—between, say, 1955, a year before Suez, and 1965—because it was then that we faced—or failed to face—the fact of the decline of Britain. What was not rescued from English life, now to be used? What went down the drain? Why does a single remark of John Raymond—that the B.B.C.'s Third Programme met the Suez crisis with a "tinkle of Scarlatti"—so stick in the mind, not only summing up that time, but still summing up England today? It is all as if there has been a starvation of the public mind of the country, even a choosing of starvation, as if there is no real effort that is any longer worth the making. The voice that dominated the crucial period of which I am speaking—John Osborne's in "A Letter to My Fellow Countrymen" (1961)—was one of impotence. "This is a letter of hate", it began; "In sincere and utter hatred", it ended. But one has to announce one's hatred in this way *only* if it is unreal.

[5] "The Small Personal Voice", in *A Small Personal Voice, Essays, Reviews, Interviews* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1974). *Declaration* was originally published in London by MacGibbon & Kee.

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What eats away the mind of England? Good individual minds may still be found, but the mind of the country seems to be frayed as if nibbled at by cellar rats, the public mind that is now so accurately reflected in the public prints: the *Spectator* now only an inconsequential rag; the *New Statesman* with the voice of an old maid who is living off her intellectual savings (never all that considerable) in a front parlour; the *Economist* with a perky insouciance in the place of any public philosophy; the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* as thin in ideas as the magazine sections which were their offspring, but now seem to be their whole characters; and *The Times* itself not even recognisably the bastard of its own lineage. Ten years ago, I was criticised by some of my colleagues in England when I contrasted the journalism of Britain and America to the disadvantage of the former.[6] Today I would revise some of my individual judgments. The *Guardian* seems to me to have recovered some spirit; I am continually surprised by the quality of the *Daily Telegraph*; and I have many more specific criticisms to make of American newspapers. But as a whole I hold to my position: English journalism has become a national disgrace.

Still, my interest here is not with journalists or editors or newspapers, as such; but only with them as yet one more—the most obvious and from day to day the most abrupt—indication of the eating away of the mind of England. It is here that one feels that the character of England may be exhibiting, under stress, a flaw that is telling. Not long ago, a young Englishman, clever and engaging, was sent by some of my friends in England to visit me. I said to him one evening: "You remind me of a combination of arrogance and frivolity that I had forgotten in England, and which now seems to me to be especially English: not American, certainly, not German, or French, or Spanish; not even Scots, just English. . . ." To my interest, he seized on my point, saying that I had put my finger on a feeling that had been making him uneasy, while not quite knowing why, about Britain at the moment and about himself in its context. He recognised that my point lay in my combination of the two words: not arrogance alone, not frivolity alone, but an arrogant frivolity to which the English mind and character are peculiarly susceptible.

[6] "On the Comforts of Anger" (ENCOUNTER July, 1963).

THE VICES OF ENGLAND are the reverse side of its virtues; what one detests in England at its worst, one admires in it at its best. There can be no hating England—as almost every word of John Osborne has revealed over the years—without exhibiting how much it is also inordinately cherished. At its worst as well as at its best, then, the character of England is to be found in its language, its pride in its use, or the command of it. As I thought of my immediate reaction to the "arrogant frivolity" of the young Englishman, I felt that much could be explained by his ready command of a complex and expressive language, in which he no longer had anything to say; even worse, that the fact that there was no longer anything for him to say did not cause any hesitation in his ready command of the language. I was in fact reminded—and so was he—of the emphasis which is given in English education, whether in essay or in debate, to the ability to discourse on anything or nothing, on one side or the other.

What is more, no sooner had I seen the young Englishman on his way, than a young Englishwoman knocked at the front door. (I sometimes have the feeling that I am regarded by my friends in England as if I were Dr Livingstone lost in a dark continent, and they organise expeditions to find me.) Clever and engaging, again, she told me that her family was working-class; yet her accent was indistinguishable from that of Lady Tweedsmuir (as I remember her in the House of Commons), and in every sentence that she uttered there was, once more, the command of the language to which one is certainly not used in America: the formed sentences which are spoken as if they were being written, the varied vocabulary that is always accessible. And as I thought of these two experiences—for I do not hear my friends from England, when they visit me, in this objective way. They are simply speaking as I have always known them speak—an explanation to which I have been reaching began to build into a resentment: that the English language—what we call the King's English—is a class language.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE may here explain some of my attitudes. I very early lost any romantic interest in my Scots parentage; but I am glad that I was born outside the English society by which I was then forcibly to be half-civilised. It has enabled me to stand always at an angle to England, even while being rounded by it. I am

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acutely aware, for example, of the sedulous manner in which my Scots accent was removed by my English education, primarily by telling me that I was speaking incorrectly; and I have equally been aware of the once-boasted classlessness of Scottish society from which I was removed to rise or fall in the elaborate class-structure of England. In short, to look at England from the United States is not unlike looking at it from Scotland, but with this difference: there may still be a Scots accent—even Scots accents—but there is no Scottish language, to speak or write: there is no Scots English in the way that there is American English, which is one of the insuperable weaknesses of Scottish nationalism.[7]

If I *like* America, it is partly because I like the vigour of its language. It is hard to talk of anyone's command of it, because it changes so much and so rapidly. In speech and in print, what is there to command? At first, I disliked and distrusted this, and the evaporation of vocabulary and grammar among the young in America is a matter to which even the Americans have now been aroused. Yet I noticed in my young English visitors —and perhaps it accounts today for the desultory tone of English literature—something that is even more disturbing: an absence of any words or grammar or syntax which had not been drilled into me a generation before. They had been taught to speak as I had been, and were therefore saying what I had been taught to say; but perhaps with less vigour, because with less conviction.

IT IS CURIOUS TO REALISE what has happened even in my own lifetime. In 1928, Fred Norton Scott published in England a book on *American Slang*, which he said he had compiled "for British readers who are struggling with the works of Sinclair Lewis and similar contributions to American literature." Even though Sir Ernest Weekley said of it that "A cursory glance at the glossary reveals that most of the words and phrases are now familiar English",[8] ten years later Desmond MacCarthy could write of the American plays that were beginning to reach the London stage: "English audiences have only a smattering of American slang; moreover, American turns and cadences of speech are not, in spite of cinemas, always easy to follow" (*New Statesman & Nation*, 2 July 1938). A year later, D. W. Brogan was more alert to what was happening, when he wrote that "we all of us speak an Americanised tongue and . . . despite the protests of snobs and pedants, of stuffed-shirts and high-brows, the career of linguistic empire has taken its course westward" ("Words Across the Sea", *Spectator*, 22 September 1939.)

What is obvious but important is that we no longer think of American *slang*; in America one does not any longer even think of *slang* as such, the word is all but obsolete. A century ago, an anonymous English reviewer could write of *Tom Sawyer*: "With regard to the style, of course, there are plenty of slang words and racy expressions, which are quite in place in conversation, but it is a just question whether it would not have been as well if the remainder of the book had not been written more uniformly in English."[9] Yet fifty years later Ernest Weekley was saying again: "It is true that English has lost the power of coining new words, and that as Mrs Virginia Woolf says when we want to freshen our speech we borrow from America." (*Athenaeum*, July 1929). It is interesting that the etymologist, accustomed to the fact that languages live by the entry of new words from different origins, was not frightened by the Americanisation of English, the influence on it of what he called "this sprightly young language." But what matters most is that the vigour of American English has been found primarily in its readiness to absorb the language of its underprivileged and its underworld and now its "underground." None of us, on either side of the Atlantic, now gets through a day without our speech being littered with Americanisms that entered American English itself from the immigrants from the frontier, from the "minorities", from the working class, from the criminal classes; and so on. If anyone chose to say (making it up as I write), "The *boss* may be a *good mixer* but when he gets *rambunctious* he talks *poppycock*", he would not merely be using four Americanisms, he would in fact be drawing on a very wide area of the American experience in the past two hundred years.

[7] It also tells us again of the important role of language in the formation and maintenance of national character. When they were powerful and their sway was extensive, the Etruscans had an identifiable language; with their incorporation into Rome, their language dissolved into Latin. (See Massimo Pallottino, *The Etruscans*, tr. J. Cremona, Penguin 1975, Indiana University Press, 1975). In the same way, Scots dissolved into English, contributing some words.

[8] "English Grammar and Language", *London Mercury* (July 1927), p. 326.

[9] *Athenaeum* (24 June 1876). One cannot help noticing that this purist reviewer entangled himself in a double negative.

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THE VIGOUR OF AMERICAN ENGLISH comes from its classlessness, and if as long ago as 1929 Ernest Weekley could say that "English has lost the power of coining new words", one must ask whether this was not because it had become—as of course it had not been in its origins—a class language; and that the class which imposed it had itself declined into immobility. It is not just a question of accents—distinguishing the working class from the governing class, Oxbridge from Redbrick, Liverpool from Surrey—but of the whole structure of the language; and that structure has been frozen, for longer than we have realised, as the class that has imposed it has been frozen. No wonder that in those niches the voices will also be stilled.

CLASS—CLASS—CLASS! One cannot get away from it as one thinks of England, as one can also not get away from it when one thinks of the grotesque events in Ulster, on which the curse of the English class system lies so heavily. It is class that eats at the mind of England, and it eats also at its possibilities of wealth. The success of the American economy has been largely due to the fact that it imagined a mass market at home for the mass production of its industry. This was the revolution—and the word may stand—which we associate with Henry Ford: he would pay his workers enough to buy the small car which they produced and so earned enough to buy the small car. . . . It was not that he imagined a small car, but that he had imagined the mass market for a small car. In much the same way, a century-and-a-half before, Benjamin Franklin had imagined a stove that could be prefabricated for a mass market.

It will be pointed out, of course, that the United States has always been largely self-sufficient in resources, its industry therefore able to produce for a domestic market, whereas Britain has always had to produce for foreign markets to pay for its imports. But this argument will not wash; the economy cannot be divorced in this way from the social climate, and the problem of the productivity of British industry in this century has to a significant extent been a social one: a total inability to understand that, if mass production is to pay, it requires a mass market. Moreover, this inability to imagine a mass market at home has meant the inability to think in terms of mass markets to which to sell abroad. When the English used to sneer at the mass production of the Japanese for overseas markets, they were merely echoing their attitude at home, that things like cars and washing machines are not for ordinary people.

In the studies of the *embourgeoisement* of the working class in England which were made by John Goldthorpe and his colleagues, one phrase is memorable. In spite of every change in his condition, they say, the life of the "affluent" industrial worker in England is still significantly different from that of the low-paid white-collar worker, and his social relationships are still largely bound within a radius of a "ten minutes' walk." Even without all the apparatus of sociology, one knows imaginatively that the phrase is true. It has always been true of the England I have known; everything that I hear and read tells me that it is still true; and it of course contrasts vividly with the often exaggerated but still real mobility of American working-class life. The radius of the "ten minutes' walk" is the exact summary of much that was blown wide apart when Henry Ford imagined the mass market for the mass production of his cars, and the rest of American industry in time followed.

FERDINAND LASSALLE ONCE criticised the German working class for their "accursed absence of needs"; if they had a bad sausage and a mug of beer, they were satisfied. But of which fully industrialised country in Western Europe does this now ring most true? An American sociologist of my acquaintance once described the ideal (or the ideology) of English society, after he had visited it, as an "honest rationing of poverty": not equal or fair, one must notice, but only honest. The phrase is stinging, and it is merely another way of talking of the "accursed absence of needs."

So humble are the demands of British trade unions for their members that one wonders how they can be decently resisted. Clement Attlee tells us in his autobiography that, when he visited the United States early in the Second World War, he was impressed by the American union leaders whom he met; but that he wished that American trade unions were less materialist in their aims, and more inspired by socialist ideals. But what on earth has the working class in Britain gained as a result of their leaders following this prescription?

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I BELIEVE THAT language, again, is somewhere at the heart of the question, and can certainly help us to illuminate and even to widen it. One reason for the accursed absence of needs is that the working class in Britain is effectively cut off from the language in which it could imagine—let alone, express—more needs than the very barest to which it is accustomed. The many in Britain are in effect ruled by a few who speak an alien tongue; they are literally—in their letters—barbarians, speaking a different language from that of the ruling minority who decide what language should correctly be spoken. It is difficult if not impossible, therefore, for the majority in Britain to imagine their needs in terms of a traditional culture to whose language they have almost no access, but without which no further needs but their present ones can be imagined.

American speech in contrast is a democratic speech, ethnic and regional differences being far more important than class differences. In 1962, Raymond Williams said that "the most easily available alternative standard" to the class standards of the traditional culture in England was "American or pseudo-American"; and that this was especially observable in the popular culture, the pseudo-American accent being "more acceptable, in many contexts, to a majority British audience than the traditional accent which once monopolised the B.B.C."[10] He could have added that this alternative accent was also more acceptable to the guardians of the traditional culture than would have been an English accent of the working class. I can find, from this distance, not the slightest evidence that this has substantially changed. Even the most famous rock groups in the intervening years have not sung in the speech of their class or their provinces, but still in "pseudo-American."

NO ONE HAS CRITICISED more severely than I some of the more grotesque forms which the eruption of the popular culture in America took in the past ten years; yet equally, now that we have survived, scathed but still capable, I do not see how anyone can deny that this eruption also invigorated the established culture in the United States, from there to spread to other countries. The popular culture of the predominantly "middle-class" society in America was able to enter into what was almost a civil war with *its own* established culture. Both attackers and defenders sprang from the same backgrounds, from the same families; at times, it seemed as if both existed in the same persons.[11] And in such a context the definition and re-definition of needs was something that engaged and affected the whole society. Whether to be sought or resisted, it was the needs and aspirations of a *commonalty* that were being debated.

It is this that is so tragically missing in England. A young American publisher of significant as well as successful books, who often visits London, happened to be there when the shortened working week was enforced in response to the energy crisis. He was amazed at the response of the English people, members mostly of the middle-class professions, whom he met. "They say that they wouldn't really mind if the working week was always shorter. The English publishers whom I know, for example, wish to preserve their income and status *vis-à-vis* the other professions in Britain, but they are not really in competition with publishers in America, say, or in Germany. . . ." This is again an expression of the "accursed absence of needs" quite high up the social ladder; and it reminds me that, when Matthew Arnold first visited the United States, he exclaimed at the warmth of American houses, wished to transport a Franklin stove to England, and wrote to his daughter that he could not understand the willingness of the English to live in cold rooms and freezing corridors. He was not commenting on some English eccentricity, but on the attitudes of a class society, in which there is an almost automatic restriction of needs.

This absence of incentive is not something that can be radically altered by altering the rates of income tax, even if one was ready to tolerate the social injustice in such an alteration. The professional man is taught to confine his needs as much as the grocer or the miner; and he then rationalises his deprivation by saying that he does not *want* what he has been taught not to *need*. "Why work any harder for those *things*? . . . Why join the rat-race? . . . Who needs all those *things* that Americans expect and in large numbers have?" The trouble with this attitude today is that it is hypocritical, where once it had

[10] "Television in Britain", *Journal of Social Science* (Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 1962).

[11] I argue this point at length in *The Spoiled Child of the Western World: The Miscarriage of the American Idea in Our Time* (Doubleday, 1975). From the point of view of this article, the elaborations and qualifications that I make there are not significant.

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at least some genuinely puritan or aristocratic impulse. It is clear that Britain is now quite as materialist in its appetites as the United States; its people want those *things*. But the attitudes of a class society keep alive a disdain for the only kinds of effort which can purchase such a Babylon; and in particular they encourage people to overlook the fact that the material life of America is promised by a democratic philosophy to all, and the performance does not altogether belie the promise.

THE WHOLE OF ENGLISH SOCIETY is still riddled, in many ways, some of them upside-down, by the aristocratic idea that a high standard of living may still be enjoyed without much personal labour. But the labour force which sustained the estate and household of a duke until the beginning of this century was a miniature army; and we all know the stories of the duke who resisted the proposal that he might economise by doing with one less pastry cook with the plea, "Hang it all! Can't a man have his biscuit?", and of the other duke who ordered an immense outlay of money and labour to grow his own banana tree, only to pronounce when he tasted its first fruit, "Damn it! it's just like any other banana." Modern technology and mass production are together substitutes for such a labour force, which for a long time it has been assumed in America can be made available to a considerable majority of the people.

That is the meaning of the washing machines and the refrigerators which have indeed released the housewife to whip up a biscuit with no exertion, and to indulge her fancy in growing all kinds of tropical plants in her sitting room. Some ingenious economist has calculated that the comforts and conveniences of the ordinary middle-class home in America would have required in Rome a slave force of many thousands; and the only justification of what we call the "consumer society" is that there is built into it this kind of equalising impulse. But this is precisely what has long been absent and is still retarded in England. Only recently has the middle class, and barely yet has the working class, grown used to the idea that it can and perhaps even should have a personal "labour force" in its own homes.

One of my most exquisite memories of Britain is of following Harold Wilson into a Glasgow tenement one Saturday morning during the 1964 election campaign. There were his supporters, living in a slum: an extended family of both sexes and three generations pursuing most of their activities in little more than one room. As the leader of the Labour Party emerged from this wretched scene, Peter Jenkins and I heard him mutter to a party official: "But think how much money the working members of that family are pulling in. . . ." To this day, Jenkins and I recall the speechless outrage to which we were reduced, for the leader of the Labour Party had not grasped the point at all: that however large the combined income of the family might be, they were still not aware of their needs on which that money could be spent. So they spent it on bingo or the pools—perhaps the only vigorous words that the working class in England has contributed to the language for a long time—but did not have a notion of household machines.

I DO NOT THINK that my emphasis on the importance of language as a determinant both of the structure of a whole society and even of what we refer to as the national character is misplaced in this context. More than any other indicator, it explains what it means today to be English, and sheds light on the depth of the problems that England faces. It explains the turning in on its own past, to read about things which can be comprehended and expressed in the language of the past. It explains the persistent refusal of the natural and rewarding association which could be found with American English and, through it, with American civilisation. It explains why no considerable English novelist ever finds in America a considerable theme. It explains why English poetry has withdrawn, almost as if scared, from the liberating and American influence of Eliot and Pound. It explains why English philosophers fuss around the edges of the great questions of the day, even when Americans have drawn these to their attention. It explains why Iris Murdoch can write a little book of impressive force, *The Sovereignty of Good*, criticising some of the false philosophies of the day, but it remains a "little book."

It explains the otherwise inexplicable persistence of a class system which no longer has any social or moral justification. It explains why the tradition of civility is evidently giving way to a quiver of resentment that is running through the whole society. It explains why the power of the trade unions leaves them only with an impression

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of their powerlessness. It explains the mob or gang violence—which is today a more alarming phenomenon than in the United States; in fact which is Britain's own problem—because it is the violence of an underprivileged group, aware of its discontents, but with no language in which to express them that seems to be understood by others. It explains the impotent restlessness of the middle class, drawn on the one hand to a popular culture that rises from below, but briefed to the manners of a traditional culture that is imposed from above. It explains the drying up of the unparalleled body of political literature, conservative and radical, liberal and socialist, for which England has so long been renowned. It explains the arrogant frivolity with which the governing class now faces great problems and debates great issues, in a language that has been frozen into impotence.

IT IS NOT MY PURPOSE HERE to prescribe. I have no doubt where I think a beginning should be made: that Britain should begin to engage itself seriously in the debate of what is the dominating issue of our times: the passion for equality. The lines need to be strenuously drawn—morally and philosophically and politically—and if this were done, there would be, amongst other things, the most drastic realignment of parties since the Labour Party, seventy-five years ago, presented its challenge to the ideologically defunct Liberals. The issue is fermenting in the United States, at each of the three levels, pulling people out of the camps, intellectual and political, in which they thought that they were secure for the rest of their lives. It is almost as if Britain needs to recover the rigour of theological debate.

The class structure of England would cease to be regarded as some quaint eccentricity, but would be attacked and defended for all it's worth, no longer a family preoccupation, but part of the world-wide debate on the nature and limits of equality. The peculiarities and tenacity of the class system would make the historical experience of England again of relevance to the rest of the world: a debate *in* England and *about* England, but again more than just that. The whole question of the monarchy would cease to be just a matter of an occasional brouhaha in Parliament, but would become one of the dividing issues between the parties, as I now think it should be; one of which would be avowedly republican. The Labour Party would become again what it was meant to be—Socialist; the Conservative Party would become again what it was meant to be—Tory; the Liberals would fall into the hole that opened between them.

The pursuit of equality, on the one hand, and the defence of property, on the other, would again be returned to the political realm, thus depriving both the trade unions and the large corporations of their moral levers. The severe under-representation of the trade unions in Parliament—one need look only at the backgrounds and qualifications of the members of the Parliamentary Labour Party to realise how little expectation of working-class representation the unions now have—would be corrected, thus removing part of the incentive to exercise their power elsewhere. The large corporations would seek representation in Parliament, in a way in which they have not yet done, forced to defend and to justify themselves openly in the political realm. The intellectual mind of the country would be roused by the greatness of the issues involved to participate again, at its own level, in the public life of the country; politics would again be concerned with ideas, and in response to them the electorate would also be roused.

. . . AND SO ON. Well, of course, it would not happen *quite* like that, and not *all* of it. But would it not be a more exciting—less querulous and less quarrelsome—country than now; being more exciting, would it not be more at peace with itself? Pulled out of the suffocations of its family-ness, and away from such distractions as the Common Market, in which no moral or intellectual, and not even any obviously political, issue was involved, would not Britain be surprised to find how great is its political tradition, and still how relevant?

Consciously to think of Britain as a small nation—to see it as a Poland or even as a Holland—is to condemn the country to the extinction of all that it was and still may be. Certainly not Poland, but also not even Holland, carried a language of such import, and all that is contained in that language, across the globe; and England cannot hope to find its way again if it thinks that there is no difference between Holland's withdrawal from its scattered possessions and its own withdrawal from empire. Almost all that I am saying was ominously predicted by Matthew

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Arnold, in a letter to his daughter, written from the Athenaeum Club in November 1865:

> "I have a conviction that there is a real, an almost imminent danger of England losing immeasurably in all ways, declining into a sort of greater Holland, for want of what I must still call ideas, for want of perceiving how the world is going and must go, and preparing itself accordingly."[12]

If they openly wrote from the Athenaeum like that now!

[12] *The Works of Matthew Arnold*, vol. XIV, p. 63.

I will emphasise his last words: "for want of . . . ideas . . . of perceiving how the world is going and must go, and preparing itself accordingly." If he had been alive today, I believe that he would have fixed his gaze on the same main point as myself: the refusal by the English of their natural association with, responsibility for, and opportunities for intellectual reward in bountifully sharing the American English language which is their own vigorous offspring.

In the High Street

Wearing a Pair of Money-Savers
I sat down in a small Café
to Eat Good Food the Friendly Way
among the Rock 'n Roll-mad Ravers;
the Church said sadly *Let Us Pray*.

In Cartwright's Verse addressed to Brian,
Lord Bishop (1638),*
the Thought is teased, complex, not straight,
a Crooked Path to his wished *Zion*;
our serving Church says *Stand and Wait*!

With sad-eyed Dogs the brown Hush Puppies
sold Style and Comfort—as they could—
Chicken was Finger-Lickin' Good.
Our Gods are like *West Indian* Duppies
to frighten Kids (Red Riding-Hood).

Cartwright, for Ordination thankful,
is grateful for Material Gain,
the Benefits are very plain—
His Thanks, like Petrol by the tankful,
come pouring out, Words stun the Brain.

I thought: *Perhaps they Both are vulgar*
(Religion, Commerce, organised)
and always must be. I surmised
that most Beliefs—*Basuto, Bulgar*—
are crude, unsound, and unbaptised

by much real Thought of Others' Profit.
The Self looks up—for Five Per Cent,
return on All to Heaven lent
duly expected. Light shines off it,
as Speculators raise the Rent.

Gavin Ewart

*See *The Metaphysical Poets*, ed. Helen Gardner, Penguin, p. 185

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Peregrine Worsthorne

Of Strong Unions in Weak Societies

Thoughts on a Ruinous Contradiction

"THE MINERS are going to be at the top of the tree, and if that hurts somebody, I am sorry." Thus spake Mr Joe Gormley, President of the National Union of Miners, in response to a recent national appeal by Britain's Socialist Government for common sacrifices in the fight against inflation.

Mr Gormley is not a militant or an extremist, still less a Marxist. Quite the opposite. He stands out from his peers as being eminently reasonable, moderate and responsible, a perfect model of a modern trade-union leader, much respected, even loved, by the public at large for his human decency and earthy, Lancastrian common sense. Yet even this paragon, this most statesman-like trade union spokesman, does not hesitate to use this kind of arrogant language; is prepared, quite unashamedly, to admit to being brazenly and ruthlessly concerned about promoting a sectional interest, however this may "hurt" anybody else.

The easy explanation is that nowadays in Britain the trade union leaders, even the gentlest of them, are so powerful that they can afford to snap their fingers at public opinion, rather in the manner of Marie Antoinette telling the French people to eat cake in the absence of bread. Up to a point, of course, the trade unions are much stronger than they have ever been before. But they are not talking like this because they are more powerful. They are more powerful because they are talking like this, because they dare to talk like this.

And they dare to talk like this because, unlike the leaders of every other institution in Britain, they, and they alone, have a clear sense of their own value and an unshaken faith in their own function. Alone among the leaders of contemporary Britain they are totally unweighed down by a sense of guilt, which enables them to display a truly aristocratic disregard for public disapproval—a disregard so spectacularly provocative as to be literally awe-inspiring.

There can be no understanding of the position of hegemony recently won by the trade unions in Britain which does not start with this central insight: that their strength springs from a profound sense of moral legitimacy, the like of which is no longer shared by any other institution. It is not, properly speaking, power at all. It is, in a word, *authority*. They are, in Britain, the embodiment of a commanding idea which has become, in recent years, invincible: the idea of social justice. Not, needless to say, the perfect embodiment; very far from it, as I shall seek to show. But more of an embodiment of this commanding idea than any other institution, and in the Kingdom of the Blind, the one-eyed man is King.

A writer in the *Sunday Times* caught an aspect of this truth recently when he observed, after attending the 1975 trade union annual conference, that

> "trade unionists now wear the sort of ties and blazers that once marked out the public school man. As the middle classes let their hair grow and knot multi-coloured ties about their necks, the trade unionists keep their hair short and sport the stripes and badges of their union—a sure sign of a diminishing sense of identity in one group and an increasing assertiveness in the other."

These two aspects of the problem seem to me integrally connected, the *increasing* assertiveness of the trade unions being caused, or, if not altogether caused, certainly aggravated and encouraged, by the *decreasing* sense of identity among all the countervailing power groups in the land. Television illustrates this process almost every night. There can be no doubt that the most impressive personages to appear on the box nowadays are trade union leaders, since they are the only people who do not apologise for what they are doing, who do not seem to be embarrassed or ashamed by their role and purpose, and are actually prepared to admit that, if necessary, they will exert their full strength to get what they want.

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"The lads need more money and they are bloody well going to get it!"

"All we ask is another £25 a week. Don't tell us the firm can't pay, since so long as the bosses drive around in Rolls Royces that excuse is a lot of damned nonsense!"

The message, of course, makes no economic sense. But given the contemporary obsession with social justice, nobody ever replies with equal bluntness, telling the workers (or their so-called elected leaders) to go and get stuffed. What the viewer sees are spokesmen for the working class confidently clenching their Left fists, resisted by nothing more impressive than the soft under-belly of the bourgeoisie, quivering with guilt, and apologising for being rich (just as clergymen today always apologise for believing in God).

That is the point. Trade unions have a cause which excuses excess, or at any rate seems to render it understandable and even tolerable. Educated opinion does not approve of trade union language or behaviour, or of the extent to which they bully society at large. There is a lot of tut-tutting and even indignation. But it is not whole-hearted indignation because however immoral some of the methods used by the trade unions are felt to be, their basic aim—improving the lot of working people—is still felt to be work of almost religious significance. Just as Popes in the Middle Ages got away with murder, claiming to be doing God's work, so today do trade union leaders enjoy a comparable kind of immunity and protection, because they, too, are doing the modern equivalent of God's work.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to exaggerate the value to the trade unions of this moral legitimacy which no other major organised group enjoys to anything like the same extent, since moral legitimacy, paradoxically enough, enables the trade unions to get away with immoral behaviour—racketeering, corruption, violence, intimidation and things which come close to bloody insurrection. For example, *The Observer* carried a long article by another miners' leader, Arthur Scargill, boasting of how, in the last miners' strike, in 1974, he led a mass picketing operation against a power station which was so militant, so numerous, so passionately violent, that it literally overpowered the police who sought to control it. The article is filled with the joy of battle, and positively gloried in trade union power: in physical power ruthlessly deployed.

If a British general were to write such an article about, say, the battle against the IRA in Ulster, with a comparably uninhibited display of pride and pleasure in the business of suppressing terrorism, if he were to use the same kind of boastfully aggressive language about some successful military operation, he would be dismissed as a pathological case, a throwback to an age of barbaric imperialism. Let a police chief anywhere in England talk about the fight against crime with even so much as a hint of brutal determination, and there would be an outcry of indignation from polite opinion. Liberal papers, like *The Times* and *The Guardian*, would yell for his resignation.

So deeply drenched in liberal squeamishness is respectable contemporary opinion in Britain that soldiers and policemen are expected to talk like Quaker brethren. It is recognised, reluctantly and grudgingly, that their function requires resource to physical force. But on no account must they be seen to enjoy it, or be engaging in it with zest and enthusiasm. If they are to be acceptable to the "powers that be", soldiers and policemen must approach their tasks with reluctant disdain and mournful apology, as if they were ashamed of being caught up in such savage pursuits.

TRADE-UNION VIOLENCE, on the other hand enjoys a much wider degree of tolerance; it provokes a much less absolutely hostile response. To suggest that it is approved of, or even tolerated, would be going too far. But liberal opinion reacts to violence in this area with ambivalence, with a desire to understand, even with a certain sympathy, since fighting for Workers' Rights, albeit occasionally with excessive zeal, has come to seem more respectable, more glorious, more in keeping with the spirit of the age, than Upholding the Law or Defending the Realm.

How this came about I shall go into in a moment. But it is difficult to doubt, on the evidence, that it *has* come about. Take, for another example, the recent furore about two building-site pickets, known as the "Shrewsbury Two", who were sent to prison for using violence against non-union workers because they had refused to lay down tools during an industrial dispute; it was mayhem so extreme that one of their victims lost an eye. It was a horrible business. Nobody denies that extreme and extensive violence did take place. Even so, the trade union movement was and is indignant about the con-

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victions, and there have been mass marches and demonstrations appealing for the release of the two thugs who now enjoy martyr status in the eyes of their fellow trade unionists. A few of the present members of the Labour Government have publicly dissociated themselves from this trade union agitation, but most have not. While not lending it their overt support, they have been careful to avoid actually denouncing it.

TO SOME EXTENT THIS IS sheer political expediency; not wanting to annoy the trade union movement at the time when its cooperation in wage restraint is being so actively courted. But that is not the whole explanation. More significant, in my view, is the deep-seated feeling of all members of the Labour Party that there *is* something indecent about sending workers to prison for any acts undertaken in pursuit of industrial disputes, however lawless or brutal the acts may have been. Nor is this just a working-class or Labour Party view. It is shared, to a lesser degree, by many middle-class Conservatives as well. Sending workers, *qua* workers, to prison is felt to be slightly shocking, unnatural, almost blasphemous, rather as in olden times it would have seemed shocking and unnatural for the law to lay its hands on members of the nobility. Needless to say, this is not a universal view. There are some Right-wingers who would like to see trade unionists hung, drawn, and quartered. But this kind of hostility is regarded as rather disreputable by the reigning liberal middle-class establishment which today shows the same unmistakable signs of snobbishness and deferential indulgence of lower-class bad behaviour as once it did of the bad behaviour of the upper class.

If anybody doubts this, reflect for a moment on how inconceivable it would be for a great capitalist corporation like ICI or Unilever to seek to organise a national campaign for the release of two of its directors caught red-handed in some comparable piece of thuggery to that for which the "Shrewsbury Two" were convicted—bursting into a rival boardroom, say, and beating into a pulp a group of competitor directors who had refused to join in some cartel arrangement. It is even more inconceivable that, in the event of such an agitation ever getting under way, a Conservative Government would refuse to condemn it and some Ministers even lend it their support.

Needless to say, even the most purblind supporter of the capitalist cause would not feel prepared, let alone compelled, to defend thuggery or lawlessness of this kind; still less to expect or demand that Conservative Ministers of the Crown should assist them in doing so. Such madness would spell the death of capitalism and the total discrediting of the Tory Party, since all sections of public opinion would be aghast, horrified, and totally repelled.

Yet these kind of extraordinary goings-on do take place in the event of trade-union thugs being sent to jail, and public opinion is not aghast, horrified, and totally repelled, or at any rate not remotely to the extent that it would be by comparable behaviour on the part of any other power group. To the best of my knowledge, there have been no mass desertions from the trade union movement in protest at the obscene attempt to canonise these two hooligans, or from the Labour Party for failing formally to anathematise this attempt. There have been critical articles in the liberal press, true, but no sense of national outrage as would certainly be provoked if any other power group were to behave with the same kind of shameless indecency.

THE REASON, of course, is very obvious. Trade unionists, in the present climate, enjoy a special dispensation, a unique exculpatory glamour that takes much of the sting out of public criticism. Mythologically speaking, they are still the underdogs, the underprivileged, with all the benefits that such a status bestows in an age dedicated to the cause of social justice. I am well aware of how absurd this is in present circumstances, since so many trade unionists are now the *nouveaux riches* and take home wage packets that make them the envy of vast numbers of professional people. In reality, they are, for the most part, very far from being underdogs. Rather the reverse. All this is true, as Conservatives try to point out.

But social attitudes never keep pace with reality, and it is really rather naive to expect them to do so. It is, after all, only within the last quarter-of-a-century that trade unionists have begun to exploit their economic strength to the full, and most of the adult British population had its attitudes formed during a period when the unions *were* the underdogs. This is still the impression which any British schoolboy or schoolgirl would get from such historical lessons as they get in their classrooms, since this is how the trade unions are made to appear.

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This, in itself, is a fascinating phenomenon—the extent to which the trade union movement, of all the institutions which flowered in the Victorian era, is the only one so far to have escaped the attention of historians bent on destroying favourable misconceptions: the only one which has not yet had its feet of clay exposed and its heroes de-mythologised. Imperialism, militarism, evangelicalism, Whiggism, Toryism, liberalism, capitalism, have all been debunked, but not trade unionism and its leaders. No Lytton Strachey, for example, has got to work on the great trade union leaders of the 19th century, showing them to be frauds and hypocrites, as has been done for the great soldiers, churchmen, statesmen, tycoons, *et al.*

RATHER THE OPPOSITE. The history of trade unionism is still told in reverential tones, with all the myths and legends of how the unions were oppressed and persecuted faithfully preserved. In fact, as revisionist historians will presumably soon get round to showing, the trade union leaders, even in the early days, were very far from being the heroic fighters for human rights that they are supposed to have been. Nor was their struggle for recognition nearly so uphill or so stony as they liked to pretend.

It is fascinating to note, for example that Frederic Harrison, the union nominee on the first Royal Commission set up to look into trade unionism in 1876, himself extremely well-disposed towards their cause, could not refrain from expressing his doubts in his private diary:

> "If the unions cannot get over it [violence against non-union members] some of them, and certainly the masons, deserve all that was said of them and are as mere organs of class tyranny. My God! Think if I were to publish a formal recantation. But I keep my counsel as yet."

In the event, he went on keeping his counsel, as a later entry shows:

> "I am not going to cave in now. The unions have serious faults but I still believe . . . them capable of improvement."

This, as it turned out, was the general view of the Royal Commission, which produced majority and minority reports showing great sympathy and understanding of the union cause.

But this is not the impression given in schools. At a time, as I say, when all the other British institutions have had their myths and legends stripped away, only the trade unions are still allowed to enjoy the benefit of brazen historical propaganda, in which they always appear as David fighting Goliath. It is impossible to imagine, for example, the BBC commissioning a television series on the history of trade unionism which approached that subject in the same knocking spirit as the recent BBC series which dealt with the history of the British Empire; or a single prestigious film-maker choosing to send up the language, customs and rituals of, say, a Mining Village with the same derisory enthusiasm as a whole host of them regularly apply to the language, customs and rituals of, say, a middle-class Suburb or a Stately Home.

Only the other day there was a splendid illustration of what I have in mind, in a new BBC series, *Days of Hope,* which purports to dramatise the social conditions of England during and immediately after the First World War. We saw a young soldier deserter coming to the aid of a Yorkshire mining village during the 1921 coal strike, when the Government of the day declared a national emergency and sent up the troops to maintain "law and order." There is no reason to complain about the director's (Ken Loach) extreme bias in favour of the miners and against the coal-owner, the army, and the police. That is his artistic right, and he made the most of it.

But what is so interesting is that an artist of his stature should have so absolutely uncritical an idea about a mining village; should want to portray it in this sugary, sentimental, chocolate-box and totally unrealistic way, and to see nothing absurd in doing so, rather as, in an earlier age, writers like G. A. Henty and Jeffery Farnol saw nothing absurd in idealising the British army or in romanticising the British nobility. No reputable contemporary artist would allow himself to be so naively indulgent about any other group in society; or expect his public to tolerate such a false perception. If he did he would be dismissed as a figure of fun. Yet Ken Loach is taken very seriously indeed, since the public does not want to be shown the naked truth about working people. Their purity of heart, like that of the Victorian maiden, simply has to be assumed, even if this involves artistic nonsense which will seem to succeeding generations no less incredible than the Victorian habit of covering up the legs of pianos does to us.

OF COURSE THIS WILL CHANGE in time. But it has not changed yet, and because it has not changed, contemporary public opinion is indoctrinated in a wholly idealised and glamorised picture of Trade Unionism, as an earlier public was indoctrinated in a wholly idealised and glamorised

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picture of, say, the Aristocracy. And just as the idea of the aristocracy as a kind of divinely ordained top-dog held sway over the imagination of Englishmen long after it had ceased to have any real basis in social or economic reality —long after, that is, aristocrats had ceased to fulfil the function from which their glamour originally sprang—so today the glamour of the trade unions, as a kind of divinely ordained defender of bottom-dogs, continues to hold a comparable place, although it, too, has no longer any basis in reality.

If the upper class was well served by the myth of its superiority, which enabled it to command a popular respect—a respect born of what was then the prevailing snobbery which took the form of admiring and kowtowing to those blessed with social and educational privilege—so today are the trade unions well served by the myth of their inferiority, which enables them to command a respect born of the latest snobbery which takes the form of admiring and kowtowing to those cursed with the lack of social and educational privilege.

I HAVE DWELT AT SOME LENGTH on what must be called the psychological background to trade union power since it seems to me absolutely central to an understanding of the problem, at any rate as it affects Britain. Needless to say, the fundamental fact, the concrete cause of increased trade union power—which is common to all advanced societies where the right to strike is recognised—has to do with the vulnerability of the advanced, interdependent industrial society to the withdrawal of labour in certain vital areas, like energy and power. The trade unions, by ruthless use of the strike weapon, can reduce a country like Britain to chaos in a few weeks far more effectively than the *Luftwaffe* was ever able to do. But, broadly speaking, trade unions in all advanced countries can do the same. Yet only in Britain has this weapon been exploited to the full in recent years, to the point where an elected government, Mr Edward Heath's (of 1970), was destroyed by it. The question that has to be answered is why the British trade unions feel so much more militant than do their counterparts in other Western countries; and, equally interesting, why the rest of society shows such a strange apathy and weakness in the face of this challenge.

These questions, it seems to me, have to be answered in terms, so to speak, of class morale: by understanding the factors making for high working-class morale and low middle-class morale, even if such an analysis runs the risk of gross simplification. The cult of equality currently sweeping the Western world hit Britain far harder than it did any other country, because there was so much more to hit: that is to say, so much more inequality. Not necessarily more inequality of wealth, but more inequality of life-styles, manner, language, accents, appearances, habits. The cult of equality has unsettled Britain more than any other country because its institutions were so inherently associated with the idea of inequality, with a class system rooted in inegalitarian ideas and values. One of the disadvantages of Britain is that, because of its record of continuity, its avoidance of political and social upheaval or revolution, all its institutions give the fatal impression of being far more stamped with a privileged style, with, if you like, the manners and appearances of the *ancien régime*, than do those of, say, France or West Germany or, even more obviously, those of the United States. As a result, they are particularly susceptible to being made to look provocatively out of keeping with the spirit of the times.

In no respect is this more obvious than in the confrontations between the two sides of industry: between management and labour. Although in fact management, in the last decade or so, has been vastly democratised, in the sense of being largely made up now of self-made men, it still does not give this impression, since its spokesmen sound and look posh, speak and dress in something approximating at any rate to the gentlemanly appearance. However they may struggle to escape the fatal appearance of inherited privilege, something of its patina still settles upon them. How could it be otherwise? A class system as deeply entrenched as that of Britain's has a momentum that carries on long after the engine has been switched off, and however much the new type of managers may spring from the same family background as the trade union leaders, the different educational and social experiences through which they have passed, on the way to the boardroom, mould them into the traditional boss class shape: which is a shape that in modern times subtracts from, rather than adding to, their authority and confidence.

BRITAIN, IN THIS RESPECT, suffers from a unique disadvantage. The successful self-made man,

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when he makes it, cannot avoid moving into a style of life which associates him with a past social system that was rooted in inherited privilege, since the pattern of life at the top still dates from those days. Take the most obvious example of a country house. If a successful, self-made tycoon wishes to indulge in such a purchase—or a successful Labour politician for that matter—it is likely to involve him in the process of beginning to seem like a country gentleman or squire, with all the upper-class associations that go with such a status. Or if he joins a London club, it is likely to be a club that was originally a gentlemanly preserve full of echoes of the old ruling class. Britain has made enormous strides in the last quarter-of-a-century towards the ideal of genuine equality of opportunity. In every walk of life the top prizes are increasingly open to men of talent. But much more than in any other country, this reality is disguised by a misleading image which suggests that little has changed, since the new non-hereditary ruling few are surrounded by the same symbols as were the old hereditary ruling few, thus fating them to share in the inhibitions and defensiveness which, nowadays, are the inevitable accompaniment of anything which smacks of privilege.

ONLY THE TRADE UNION LEADERS, so far, have escaped this albatross and are therefore in a position to exercise power without apology, since they look and sound as men of power should look and sound in an age when privilege is a mark, not of divine grace—as it used to be—but of the devil's handiwork. (Much more so than Labour Party leaders who are increasingly indistinguishable, in social and educational background, from their Conservative counterparts.) Not only, in short, do they have the increased economic power which, as I say, is a factor common to all trade-union movements today in a free society—but also this intangible advantage of embodying the one style of leadership in Britain today which avoids appearing both anachronistic and illegitimate. They are exceptionally strong, therefore, both physically and morally, so strong as to be, at any rate for the time being, irresistible.

I say "for the time being", since it is only a matter of time before the cultural worm begins to turn and start eating away at working-class power and authority, as it has eaten away at the moral base of earlier power groups. But until this happens, until the breach is made between the wielders of physical power and the cultural legitimisers of that power, there is not much that can be done by those who would wish to reverse this trend.

In any case, those who do wish to reverse this trend—let us call them, for want of a better description, the conservative middle classes—suffer from another disadvantage in launching such a struggle, also peculiar to Britain. They are, quite simply, much too nice; far nicer than their counterparts on the Continent or in the United States. This, again, is another hangover of the British class system which, through the public schools, taught the 19th-century bourgeoisie to think like country gentlemen. As a result, their heirs today find themselves locked in a chivalrous tradition wholly unsuited to the new reality of class war created by trade union militancy, rather as the medieval knights, accustomed to the romantic tournaments of Arthurian legend, were gravely inhibited when it came to fighting pitched battles against peasant armies.

Noblesse oblige and all the other anachronistic hangovers of an aristocratic age, which only make sense against a background of secure privilege and unchallenged strength, still debilitate the boardrooms of Britain, inducing in them a wholly inappropriate reluctance to recognise that the paternalistic days of benevolent goodwill have long since passed into history. The backs of British management are up against the wall; yet they still hanker after sitting on the fence as if the fence itself had not been turned into a barricade.

IN THE BAD OLD DAYS of capitalistic exploitation, such a civilising injection of feudal sense of responsibility was thoroughly desirable, vastly and valuably moderating the ruthless inhumanity of class warfare.

It was all to the good in those days that the bourgeois boss should have married into the landed gentry, been educated at an Anglican public school, and generally merged his identity in a way of life rooted more in the cricket fields of Eton than in the jungle of the market place; better, that is, at least in terms of social peace if not in terms of maintaining Britain's industrial supremacy.

But today, with the balance of power having switched overwhelmingly on to the side of organised labour, these gentlemanly inhibitions,

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these anachronistic scruples born out of a world of green lawns and dreaming spires, are proving an appalling handicap in the new cycle of class war about to reach its climax, since the trade union generals of the opposing armies (Jack Jones, Hugh Scanlon, Mick McGahey, Arthur Scargill) have learnt their ethics of combat in an entirely different and more serious school where no holds are barred, no Marquis of Queensberry rules observed.

A DEEPLY DISTURBING PARALLEL can be drawn between the way this problem is affecting us domestically now and the way it bedevilled foreign affairs in the 1920s and 1930s when the then ruling class proved pitifully unwilling to recognise the ruthless nature of the powers arrayed against it: the extent to which the new rulers in Japan, Germany, and Italy were fighting for supremacy in earnest, inhabiting a world which owed nothing to Christian pieties instilled in the classrooms and chapels of the English public school. Herr Hitler was not a gentleman. Nor are the Communists in the unions who are also fighting to win.

On the European Continent, the industrial climate is notably different from what it is here, because management is backed by a middle class no less prone to explosions of militant anger, no more reluctant to take to the streets—to the barricades too, if necessary—than are the workers.

Take France, for example, where the middle class is fully prepared to march, demonstrate, break windows, and even heads if need be, rather than allow itself to be pushed around or dictated to by the Left. If on a Monday the Communists get 100,000 parading down the Champs-Elysées, hands clenched in menace, on a Tuesday the Right will do the same. Each side knows the other's strength, and potential nastiness, and respects it. There is a real and chastening balance of mutual deterrence.

But that is because the middle class thinks like a middle class, with its values rooted in a proper understanding of what the class struggle entails, without its range of vision interrupted by the mirage of gentlemanly, turn-the-other-cheek behaviour. In the heyday of high capitalism this was a great disadvantage, since it meant that the Continental bosses ground the faces of the poor with a primitive, single-minded savagery which the older aristocratic influences greatly helped to dilute in this country. Result: Red revolution in France, from which Britain was spared.

But the problem today is not one of moderating the excesses of capitalism, at a time of pitiful proletarian weakness, for which purpose the English public-school education, with its contempt for hard industrial efficiency and its romantic idealisation of knightly chivalry, was so admirably suited. The problem today is one of resisting ruthless trade-union power, of fighting for bourgeois values against overwhelming odds.

For this wholly different purpose the public school ethic is disastrously inappropriate, deplorably inhibiting. The Gentlemen of England would prefer to die rather than demonstrate; and a stiff upper lip or, if driven to extremity, perhaps a rolled umbrella, is the nearest thing to an offensive weapon they would think of brandishing against the massed muscle of organised labour.

AS A RESULT, the social balance in Britain has been dangerously upset, with organised labour discovering the full extent of its power—which in any advanced technological society is almost limitless—without any countervailing spirit of comparably aggressive purposefulness animating the other side of industry. The language and the mood of the Right (indeed the whole of the non-Left) are still redolent of a vanished age when the middle class, unlike its Continental counterparts, felt so impregnably secure as to indulge in a kind of psychological disarmament which has now left it perilously vulnerable.

NO DOUBT THIS TOO will change, in time. But I am writing of the present, not the future, trying to explain why the trade unions *today* are riding so high in Britain. There are many other reasons than those on which I have touched here. But the most basic reason, which I have tried to describe, is that their rise to a position of economic ascendancy, brought about largely through the accidents of technological development, has coincided with social and cultural developments which enable them to use their strength with a clear conscience, while those who would resist them lack the will to do so uninhibitedly, because they doubt—or feel guilty about—the virtue of their cause. To some extent, all this is true of other democratic capitalistic societies. But it is more true in Britain than elsewhere, which is why the problem is so much worse here and will take so much longer to solve.

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Column

I SHALL ALWAYS remember Friday, 17 October, as one of the strangest, saddest and most disturbing days of my life, in which a bizarre concatenation of events combined to convince me that all was for the worst in the worst of all possible worlds.

I had flown into New York from San Francisco in the early hours of the morning and after a few hours' sleep awoke to find the city tottering on the verge of bankruptcy; and so it remained throughout the day, until, at the last hour, it seemed, the president of the New York teachers' union was finally bullied into directing the union's pension fund to invest 150 million dollars in the city's worthless bonds.

This was in itself enough to give a certain air of unreality to the city; how can one be so rich and so poor at the same time? But New York's finances are fortunately none of my affair; what cast a dark shadow over the day for me was to learn that an old and dear friend, Lionel Trilling, with whom I had expected to stay in New York, was on his death bed and that there was no hope of his recovery. It seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that New York should have been in mourning, not for her shattered finances, but for one of her most distinguished sons, who was as much a part of the city's cultural life as the Rockefeller Center or the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

I had the same feeling when, three weeks later, I learned that he was dead. For he was a New Yorker born and bred, a citizen of no mean city, who had devoted nearly all his life to the service of New York's own great university of Columbia, and by his teaching and his writing there had exercised a decisive influence on the intellectual life of his time. He was indeed one of the most gifted writers and critics of an exceptionally gifted generation of Americans, even though by the end of his life American culture had taken a direction which seemed to lead away from everything in which he believed.

To say that his life was devoted to literary criticism and university teaching may give the impression that it was spent in some academic ivory tower, but in fact for him literature, learning, teaching, research were simply ways in which he came into close and intimate contact with life, sometimes in forms which were violent and ugly. The student riots which struck Columbia in 1968 were a direct manifestation of forces in American life which aimed to destroy everything which he, and the university itself, had tried to achieve, and even after they had died down they remained for him a reason for profound grief and distress. His admirable novel, *The Middle of the Journey*, is concerned with matters that directly affected the life of every American citizen and led, in the prosecution of Alger Hiss for perjury, to one of the most sensational political trials of the century. A strange freak of fortune had made Trilling a fellow student with the bizarre hero/villain of the case, Whittaker Chambers, of whom he has given a fascinating account in his introduction to the new edition of the novel which has recently been published.[1]

In his tight grasp of the relationship which exists between literature and life, Trilling may well be compared with Matthew Arnold, and the affinities between the two are no doubt among the reasons why Arnold was the subject of one of his earliest and best books. Like Arnold, he could not dissociate himself from the contemporary scene, however troubled and painful, and he saw it as Arnold saw it in "Dover Beach":

> *And we are here as on a darkling plain*
> *Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight*
> *Where ignorant armies clash by night.*

Ignorance was the army he fought all his life, and by his teaching and his example he brought into American life something of the sweetness and light which Arnold himself regarded as the hallmark of a civilised society.

BUT THERE ARE OTHERS better qualified than I to assess Trilling's contribution to literature and to learning. For myself, I valued him as a person, with an individual style of his own, combined with a singular sweetness of character. He had a certain New York elegance of manner and demeanour, both a rigour and a generosity of mind, and a kind of unobtrusive, dark, Jewish good looks, which made one think of him as something very special. He was devoted to England, and to English, and European, culture, yet with all this it was an essential part of the pleasure of his friendship that he remained always and unmistakably an American. For this reason, he was one of the best unofficial ambassadors the United States have ever sent to this country.

Mark Pattison, a very different kind of person, once wrote, in his life of Casaubon, the great 16th-century scholar, that the ultimate end of the life of learning is to produce, not a book, but a

[1] See, in ENCOUNTER, "Column" (June 1975) and Malcolm Bradbury, "The It & the We" (November 1975).

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man. One could not find anyone better than Trilling to exemplify the truth of this proposition.

★

THE THOUGHT OF HIM was very much in my mind that morning when I went to the United Nations building on the bank of the East River; for Trilling was a Jew, and the business before the General Assembly's Third Committee, misnamed the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee, was a resolution condemning Zionism as "a form of racism and of racial discrimination." It was sponsored by a coalition of Arab and African states and of the Soviet bloc (with the honourable exception of Romania) and was passed by a large majority, of 70 members in favour, 29 against, with 27 abstaining. The resolution, as I write this week, has come before the General Assembly in plenary session and has been given the official approval of the United Nations Organisation.

It is difficult to convey the sense of mingled horror and incredulity with which I listened to the debate in the Third Committee. One knows of course that there are real and genuine grounds for conflict between the state of Israel and its Arab neighbours, and that this conflict provokes acute and bitter dissension, in which right is not entirely on Israel's side. And one would concede that the United Nations provides the only public forum in which such a conflict might become the subject of rational discussion, out of which, however improbably, some fruitful result might possibly arise. But what was shameful and disgraceful was that the discussion should be conducted, as it was in the Third Committee, in terms, not of a political conflict between states, but of a squalid and brutal anti-Semitism, of a kind, one had thought, the world would no longer tolerate.

There were ghosts haunting the Third Committee that day; the ghosts of Hitler and Goebbels and Julius Streicher, grinning with delight to hear, not only Israel, but Jews as such denounced in language which would have provoked hysterical applause at any Nuremberg rally and justified a special edition of *Der Stürmer*. And there were other ghosts also at the debate; the ghosts of the 6,000,000 dead in Dachau and Sachsenhausen and other extermination camps, listening to the same voices which had cheered and jeered and abused them as they made their way to the gas chambers. For the fundamental thesis advanced by the supporters of the resolution, and approved by the majority of the Third Committee, was that to be a Jew, and to be proud of it, and to be determined to preserve the right to be a Jew, is to be an enemy of the human race.

After the defeat of National Socialism, which cost the world millions of lives, and the horrors of the Final Solution, one had thought that such voices had been silenced for ever, at least in any society which even half-pretended to be civilised. The truth is otherwise. Today, the authentic voice of anti-Semitism, strengthened and invigorated by the riches and hatreds of the oil-producing nations, is once again respectable; it has become *salonfähig* and speaks in the best society, and nowhere more blatantly or stridently than in the General Assembly of the United Nations.

IF THERE WERE ANY reassurance to be found in the debate it was in the attitude adopted by the United States; it was at least some comfort that the most powerful country in the world should have expressed its hostility to the resolution in the most explicit and undiplomatic language. The formal, yet eloquent, written statement which was read, amid stony silence, by Mr Leonard Garment, the U.S. representative on the Third Committee, deserves to be quoted at some length, both because it exposed the hypocrisy and *mauvaise foi* of the motives which inspired the resolution, and because of the warning it gave of the dangers implicit in the resolution for the United Nations itself. It should be noted, however, that the United States was alone among the major powers in adopting so uncompromising a stance.

> This resolution [said Mr Garment, on behalf of his country] asks us to commit one of the most grievous errors in the 30-year life of this organisation.
>
> This committee is preparing itself, with deliberation and foreknowledge, to perform a supreme act of deceit, to make a massive attack on the moral realities of the world.
>
> Under the guise of a programme to eliminate racism, the United Nations is at the point of officially endorsing anti-Semitism, one of the oldest and most virulent forms of racism known to human history. This draft explicitly encourages the racism known as anti-Semitism even as it would have us believe that its words will lead to the elimination of racism.
>
> I choose my words carefully when I say that this is an obscene act. The United States protests this act. But protest alone is not enough. In fairness to ourselves we must also issue a warning. This resolution places the work of the United Nations in jeopardy. . . .
>
> Zionism is a movement which has as its contemporary thrust the preservation of the small remnant of the Jewish people that survived the horrors of a racial holocaust. By equating Zionism with racism this resolution discredits the good faith of our joint efforts to fight actual racism. It discredits these efforts morally and it cripples them politically. . . .

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> The United Nations throughout its 30-year history has not lived by the force of majorities; it has not lived by the force of arms. It has lived only—I repeat, only—because it has been thought that the nations of the world, assembled together, would give voice to the most decent and humane instincts of mankind. From this thought has come the moral authority of the United Nations, and from this thought its influence upon human affairs.
>
> Actions like this do not go unnoticed. They do not succeed without consequences, many of which, while only imperfectly perceived at the time, soon become an ineradicable part of a new and regrettable reality. Let us make no mistake: at risk today is the moral authority which is the United Nations' only ultimate claim for the support of our peoples.

The decent and humane instincts of mankind! There was little room for them in the debate in the Third Committee. I believe that the United States was right in its unqualified opposition to the resolution, and I wished that the British representative on the Committee could have expressed himself in equally forthright terms; though perhaps this was too much to expect at a moment when Britain was preparing to receive, with the servility due to a large creditor, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, one of the most energetic sponsors of the resolution, and the policy it represents, which in the end is nothing less than the elimination of the state of Israel and the moral and physical destruction of the Jewish people.

But I believe that the United States was also right in its grave warning of the consequences which would ensue for the United Nations itself, if the General Assembly in plenary session should endorse, as it has done, the resolution of its Third Committee. The United Nations may be an appropriate forum for discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the hope of arriving at some understanding which may help to promote the cause of peace. But it cannot fulfil that function if it has identified itself with the cause of anti-Semitism; much less can it pretend, with any credibility, to be the conscience of the world and the guardian of human rights and human dignity.

The United Nations has conferred upon anti-Semitism a moral authority it has never previously possessed in modern times, and threatens the world once again with all the horrors which were thought to have been exorcised by the defeat of National Socialism. Anti-Semitism was once the opium of the *lumpenproletariat* and the lower-middle classes, until for a time Hitler elevated it to the dignity of a national religion; today it has become the LSD of the Arab peoples, leading them, with the encouragement of the Soviet Union and its satellites, on dizzy trips into a stratosphere where the Final Solution may seem once again to be at hand. They cannot expect, however, nor can the United Nations expect, that countries with any claim to be civilised should accompany them on such a flight.

A DAY IN NEW YORK! A great city bankrupt; a Jewish writer and teacher, "New York's secular rabbi" (as Frank Kermode has called him) on his death bed; and the United Nations preparing to go on official record as an anti-Semitic organisation, like the Black Hundreds or the National-Socialist Party. It is not surprising, perhaps, that New York can be frightening. *Stupor mundi*, one might say, the wonder of the world, as it was said of the Emperor Frederick II, who alternately dazzled and scandalised his contemporaries by the mere fact that such a being could exist.

R

Kwickie Service

Nobody else in the queue suspects
my world is not yours. You let fall
my cold hand, bloom smothers my eyes.

From the deserted stop you watch me.
I am now among the others.
My pennies rattle in the plastic bowl.
Doors whisper shut. This *Kwickie Service*
(I think I have never seen you so sad)
draws me towards the ferry to cross
from your side of the river to mine.

Peter Reading

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Home Office

I am given the advice but no
definition, on entering the country,
to have my position "regularised",
which feels like being a member
of a shadow cabinet shadowing
his counterpart in the real
government. The real government acts
with power—the counterpart who
devotes his time to power & not
to shadowing. I am a shadow of the person
I would be if I were in the home
office & am full of dark resentments, being
out of power, out of favour, outside
the home office & still in it:
I am a shadow citizen needing some kind
designation, but they say:
who are you?—
who has loved,
a shadow making love
to a shadow, each with a power-
ful imagination of how powerful
these shadows might be,
given definition: what acts
might we not perform!—as
our counterparts in the flesh which is
given definition by the bone—
they tell me I might enter
& I am given leave, but my position is not
regularised, if I enter I may not stay
under present regulations, my imagination
is irregular, my position is
not defined but in my imagination
I am constantly entering in
many irregular positions; we
are shadows governed by a home office
which is regular & interested
in power; when one is out
of power, one is neither regular
nor interesting, one is a shadow of
a home office, full of dark resentments.

Robert Vas Dias

The Hyperboreans

Those city states staked out
On flat, thousand-acre sites
Of damp moorland
Are the theoretical locations
Most of us inhabit.

The iron-bound, leather volumes
Of political philosophies
Silting the dust
In brown country-house libraries
Are fulfilled here .

(Just turning a tap on proves it).
Rough, pictish hordes scrabbling
Like bodied clouds
Drain away into our sealed ducts
From bare hills.

Though proofed against most of their
Uncivil, natural subversions,
We, too, invent,
Within bedded walls, our own
Distanced locations,

The unmapped settlements only we
Can find a way to, where a train
Stops by a sign
At the rail-head, near the new
Workers' co-op.

Helevyn the letters say. Cerilic
Or Gaelic? The paint glistens.
Stacked with soft peat,
A line of yellow trucks shunts out
To the power station;

While, on afforested slopes,
Chain-saws bite into spruce and fir.
The pine huts
Everyone lives in fresh keenly
Of green juniper;

Their strenuous inhabitants smile
In a chill light, then go on working.
They know all the
Objections to this bracken frontier,
Lawless, chastening;

And if their loves are seldom easy
Their only authorities are those
Black, cairnless summits,
And these their energetic combines
Are subduing.

Tom Paulin

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Transubstantiation

I can do without bread
I am overweight in any case
and loathe the way it nails me
to this place without even
a memory of growing corn

that bloody birth symbol—
this is my body! I'm on the same
scrubbed table waiting for the thing
which will eat me!

what a meal to worship—
eaten and eaten and then eaten
and eaten again, like a live nest
of carved loaves chewing
their way back to the centre.

★

The baker's in Dulwich
where we sat on the warm paving stones
and ate bread pudding.

and the other one
where the girl stood on her hands
and showed waving legs

we were older then

long before the days
of Wheaten and Granary
Slimcea and Sandwich Cut
bread was just bread
and you spread it and ate it
things will never be that small again.

★

This is our Give-us-this-day bread
which we eat from each other
doubting that there is enough
for everyone and hoping that
eating may maintain love

my daughter and I have chosen
a fast stream where the fish
are hidden and the birds bombard
their fry with empty bellies.

"There is no bread but bread" I tell her
"and hunger is its prophet."

★

In heaven, eating bread will bring us
closer—how could it be otherwise?

In heaven, we will take root eating bread
and grow together for the duration of the meal.

I hope I will eat bread with my daughter
in heaven, for this is what eating bread is about.

It will make up for the bread I have eaten here
which is piled loaf upon loaf around me.

like a wall which will feed no one
not even two little fishes.

Edwin Brock

Dream

I dreamt I walked the streets of your home town.
I knew it though the map I carried shook,
And all the jumbled houses had the look
Of faces but not one of them your own.
The crazy grid of blocks went up and down,
And when I showed a passing cop my book
I seemed to feel the pleasure that he took
Scrawling across the page, "address unknown."

So in despair I tried the city hall
With its bronze eagle sneering as I went in.
Yet there I was expected. They knew all,
Far more than I did. "Yes, we have her here
Waiting identification. This way, sir.
We understand she named you next-of-kin."

Robert Gittings

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FILM

Cobblers from France

Paris Porn—By JOHN WEIGHTMAN

THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT has just announced a heavy tax on pornographic films, to the great indignation of film-makers and critics, who see this measure both as an insidious form of censorship and as a threat to the whole film industry. Some film-makers claim to use part of the proceeds from sex-films to finance other projects, and they are now going to be milked of their profits, as if the naughty cinemas were licensed brothels directly feeding the inland revenue. At the same time, since French films are classified after they have been made, and not beforehand on the basis of the scenario, directors who wish to reach the general public paying average prices will have to curb their artistic freedom, in case their work is put into the erotic category.

Perhaps the government has decided that a heavy financial levy is, in fact, the best means of curbing pornography without raising the awkward principle of censorship. If so, the remnants of bourgeois morality are simply operating in a timid, roundabout way. On the other hand, the remnants of morality combined with hypocrisy may have led the government to conclude that it should have a larger share of the fortunes made by such films as *Last Tango in Paris* and *Emmanuelle*. France was behind for a while in the race towards permissiveness, but now she is catching up and Paris could again become the naughty capital of the world. If overt cinematographic sex is here to stay, like alcohol, the public will presumably go on paying for it through the nose, as they do for whisky. But, in either case, the problem of the rights and wrongs of pornography remains unsolved, either by the government or its critics.

It has been stirring again in my mind, as I have reflected on the two latest bluish films to arrive from France: *Les valseuses* by Bernard Blier (Curzon Cinema) and *Grandeur nature* by Luis Berlanga (Jacey in the Strand). At least one can say that, in both cases, the outspokenness is essential to the theme; without their obscenity, they would not exist, and if any form of censorship were restored, such films would not be made. The question is: what are the degrees of intelligence and acceptability in obscenity itself?

THE ORIGINAL NOVEL of *Les valseuses* was a best-seller in France, and the film, if I remember rightly, was treated with some respect by the critics when it was first shown about two years ago. Certainly, it is not flabby, chocolate-box porn, like the egregious *Emmanuelle*. It is, on the surface at least, crisp, lively and aggressive. The significance of the slang title (the swinging ones = testicles) is, I take it, that *les valseuses font valser les jeunes gens*, young men are led a dance by their own superabundant virility. The mindless vitality of thugs is, presumably, undirected or non-sublimated sexual energy. At any rate, this film seems to be by *Easy Rider* out of *Clockwork Orange*. The two jolly heroes roam across France stealing cars, living on their wits and picking up women, in a sort of ejaculatory dream of freedom. Being traditional French *révoltés*, they have no patience with ordinary morality. They bully a harmless middle-aged woman, they pick up a girl and offer her as payment to a man who has rendered them a service, they terrify a young mother in a railway carriage and force her to give them suck, and they saw through the axle of a car belonging to a man who has offended them.

All this, to my mind, is detestable. Bullies, even dashing bullies, and particularly when they hunt in pairs or gangs, are reverting to animal status without having the excuse of total animal innocence; sperm may be a cause but it cannot, in a human being, be a justification. Also, while the film is much more intelligent in its cynicism than *Emmanuelle*, it is basically sentimental in that, consciously or unconsciously, it softens the misdemeanours of the young men with humour

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and through appeals to anti-Establishment prejudice.

The main girl the heroes pick up, who seems at first sight to be a victim, turns out to have no more scruples than they themselves. Besides, she is frigid, and after they have exhausted themselves in trying vainly to arouse her, she is suddenly and unexpectedly satisfied by an unprepossessing individual, a genuine homicidal criminal, in comparison with whom they are a couple of bungling amateurs. Jeanne Moreau figures, in an overheated little episode, as a severe and frantic woman, who has just emerged from prison, haunted by the sexual diminution of the menopause. The heroes, showing that their anarchistic hearts, as well as their other attributes, are in the right place, persuade her to accompany them, give her a first-class meal, and then unite with her jointly.

But what, in the end, do these anarchists really want, and what, for a time, do they actually enjoy? An unlimited supply of money, buddy-love with heterosexual sex on the side, slap-up meals, a powerful car and a nice *résidence secondaire* with fishing along a picturesque, nearby canal. The ideal is perfectly petit-bourgeois and even male chauvinist, and its only peculiarity is its criminal achievement outside the bourgeois context. A slight hint of poetic justice is suggested at the end, when the two heroes and their female crony drive off, unwittingly, in the car with the sawn-through axle. However, this is just another weakness; in the world of pure revolt, there can, by definition, be no such thing as poetic justice. So I would write off *Les valseuses* as being interestingly and repellently symptomatic rather than good. But no doubt one can say, as usual, that it is better to have the symptoms expressed, and exposed for what they are, instead of being concealed by inhibitions.

A SIMILAR DEFENCE could probably be made out for *Grandeur nature*, the kinkiest statement of misogyny I think I have ever seen. Berlanga is said to be a disciple of Buñuel, but the flavour of the film is nearer to the self-degradation of *Last Tango in Paris*, since it is a sort of woman-hater's *Lost Weekend*. Michel Piccoli, a middle-aged Parisian dentist with a posh practice, a fashionable wife and a long backlog of mistresses, has grown tired of the adjustments necessary with real women, and has ordered, from Japan, a life-size plastic doll with all the necessary bumps and apertures. He brings her out of her polystyrene sarcophagus as if she were an Egyptian princess in a perfect state of preservation. He coos over her, takes her to a fashion-house to have her modishly dressed, weds her to the sound of the Wedding March on his Hi-Fi, copulates with her under the shower, and eventually does with her all the things that gentlemen can do with ladies. It is important to note that he records most of this on his closed-circuit TV (cf. *A Bigger Splash*), so as to be able to play it back to himself and comment on it to his dumb plastic blonde.

The sight of Piccoli in black underwear doing a Marlene Dietrich, or naked under a fur-coat imitating Bette Davis, for the edification of the Japanese artefact is one of the weirder experiences provided by the film. Almost as peculiar is the passage in which he takes the doll to meet his mother, and she accepts the situation with smiling broadmindedness, and even gives him the key to her Paris flat so that he can pursue his idyll in comfort after leaving his wife. In the bad old days before permissiveness, I occasionally heard it said that very possessive French bourgeois mothers would rather their sons debauched the maid or committed incest with their sisters than that they should get involved with strange women outside the family. But this is the first time I have seen it suggested that a mother might be glad that her son was having an affair with a doll, which she dresses up in the clothes she herself wore when young. At this point, Narcissus, Oedipus and Onan seem to be joining hands to dance a very queer round.

THE MORAL APPEARS to be, however, that even love with an unresisting doll has to be seasoned with drama. The dentist, who by now is cracking up, deliberately arranges a videotape recording of the rape of the doll by his Spanish concierge, so that he can gloat over the scene and beat her for being a trollop. When she is later stolen and violated by a crowd of immigrant Spanish workmen in their bachelor dormitory-hut, he loses his grip altogether and drives his car into the Seine, where he sinks but the doll floats. A "woman" has killed him in the end.

It is difficult to say what the director intended. Perhaps the film is just a macabre joke, made with the dirty-raincoat trade in mind, or perhaps, since Piccoli is in it, it is meant more seriously as an allegory of the tragic dilemma of the male who cannot get on with females and therefore tries to live out both sexual roles himself, with the help of a dummy, in a frenzy of erotic ventriloquism. I am surer about the general effect; it is dangerously stimulating. After gazing at the wretched doll for an hour and a half, one longs for all women, or any woman, *emmerdeuse ou emmerdante*, with a human light in her eyes and some initiative in her limbs.

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Dante Now

The Gossip of Eternity—By GEORGE STEINER

IN HIS ESSAY "Talking About Dante", Osip Mandelstam compares the *Divina Commedia* to a crystallographic growth in which the unceasing drive towards the creation of interlocking forms penetrates and unites the whole.

> Thus, one has to imagine how it would be if bees had worked at the creation of this thirteen-thousand-faceted shape, bees endowed with instinctive stereometric genius, who attracted more and still more bees as they were needed. The work of these bees, who always keep an eye on the whole, is not equally difficult at the various stages of the process. Their cooperation broadens and becomes more complex as they proceed with the formation of the combs, by means of which space virtually arises out of itself.

There is a comparable simile for dynamic coherence in Pope's *Essay on Man:*

> *The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!*
> *Feels at each thread, and lives along the line.*

Crystals, honeycombs, the vital reticulations of the spider's web: each is an analogy towards Mandelstam's exultant find that the entirety of the *Commedia* "is one single unified and indivisible stanza." A stanza of 14,233 verses composed, so far as the evidence tells, over ten years of personal dislocation and political tumult. This live compaction, whose validation depends throughout on the quality of our reading, on our capacity, itself triggered and disciplined by the poem, to keep in reciprocal and equilibrating motion the overall design and the local intensity, obviously derives from several axes of relation ("one integral development of a crystallographic theme").

One axis is contextual. To cite a banal example (which may be best, inhibiting, as it does, the notion that one has something novel to contribute, yet showing, like the teasing ridge ahead of a mountain-walker, that there is always more perspective, more height to be worked for): the *Divina Commedia* has no direct knowledge of Homer. The Middle Ages draw their Homeric material from the compilation of the so-called Dictys Cretensis, in which Ulysses is done to death by Telegonus, his son by Circe. None the less, Dante is the only "modern" (until Joyce) to have augmented fundamentally the reach of Homeric meaning, to have pierced to the core of that meaning by adding "what was already there." He is able to do so because the surrounding, sustaining literary-philosophic context is of an authority of suggestion and continuity so firm as to compel but also hold in place Dante's intuition of the Homeric sense. He visions the errant son of Laertes through a Latin perspective, through Virgil's own distancing and intimations of an archaic, lost excess of individual heroic stature—such vision through and past Virgil being at once the cognitive and the dramatic method of the *Commedia*'s concordance with the past.

In Book V of Cicero's *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, Dante finds a crucial gloss on the song of the Sirens. It was neither the sweetness of their voices nor the charm of their repertoire which riveted the passing voyager, but their profession of knowledge—*sed quia multa se scire profitebantur*. Little wonder, observes Cicero, that a man avid of intelligence (*mirum sapientiae cupido*) might prefer their solicitation even to a return home. Horace makes a comparable point in *Epistles* I, ii. The negative, which will be key to Dante's account of Ulysses' end, lurks, between the lines as it were, of Seneca's 88th moral letter, *Ad Lucilium*. The man, adverts Seneca, must have sailed outside our known world, *extra notum nobis orbem* (as the Genoese Vivaldi brothers were to do in 1291, disappearing without trace). We also, navigators on a daily, housebound scale, meet with fierce storms of the spirit, and our depravities thrust us into the proud miseries that afflicted Ulysses. A passing, almost casual moral *exemplum*, of the kind in which Seneca abounds, but nodal in the weave of reference and cross-reference.

THERE ARE FURTHER threads. Brunetto Latini, himself a talismanic figure of excellence and errancy in the *Inferno*, wrote a poem which told

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of the Pillars of Hercules where *la terra e terminata*. In Book I of the *Aeneid*, the hero exhorts his company to recall the dangers already past, and put away sad fear. The *Alexandreis* of the 12th century French poet Walter of Chatillon comes even closer: since there is nothing left of our world to traverse and lest our weapons go to rust, "let us seek out those who dwell under another sun." (Dante seems to have known this text.) The doomed vessel of his Ulysses spreads her wings exactly as did the argosies in *Aeneid* III, 520, and in verse 47 of Propertius' *Elegies* IV, vi. When fatality strikes, it does so in tested, licensed terms. The maelstrom at the foot of the Mountain of Purgatory closely resembles the vortex which spins and engulfs the ship in lines 114–17 of the first Book of the *Aeneid*. The murderous twist is the same and the words echo:

ast illam ter fluctus ibidem torquet
Tre volte il fé girar con tutte l'acque.

Dante's "invention" in *Inferno* XXVI is prodigious, the narrative pace entirely his. But the mapping, the constraints which ensure depth yet contravene idiosyncracy and asymmetry, the charged economy of implication are contextual. They derive from the canonic availability of the classic precedent, from the axiomatic presupposition, without which the *Commedia* could literally not be, that all texts—poetic, fabulous, historical, mythographic, liturgical, philosophical, sacred, profane—are present for purposes of allusion and citation. The "motion of spirit" (Dante's own phrase) which underwrites poetic craft is collective and cumulative. Context presses on text with the weight of shaping life, crystallising particular inspiration, inhibiting extravagance which signifies waste wandering or autistic contrivance.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE. Canto XXV of the *Purgatorio* is among the most physiological and formally disputatious of the whole journey. The question, which Milton will remember, bears on the precise order of carnality to be attributed to the presence of the repentant dead ("how can they grow lean where there is no need of nourishment?"). Virgil replies by citing the extinction of Meleager as narrated in Book VIII of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Here, too, there is a mystery of exact concurrence between seemingly unrelated entities—the wasting of a firebrand and the consumption of the wretched huntsman (a concurrence declared in one of the lapidary splendours of Latin poetry: *simul est exstinctus uterque*).

But the force of analogy is, to a precisely gauged degree, only partial and metaphoric. So Virgil calls on Statius to take up the argument. Statius is the lesser poet, a fact subtly pointed to by the "prosaic" and technical character of his response. But his is a Christian soul whose access to revealed truths or, more exactly, to the logic of modulation from mundane to doctrinal patterns of understanding, is necessarily beyond that of Virgil. Statius' disquisition on digestion, on the metamorphic processes which connect nutriments to blood, blood to the generative virtues of the human organism, and these same virtues to the vegetative, sensitive and rational orders of the spirit, is at once dense and stringent. It draws, with the richly allusive economy made possible by the impartiality of the canonic, on a sequence of sources. These are both pagan and Christian, often in calculated alternation, and it is their mutual interrelations and cumulative mass which form a living framework (Mandelstam's hexagonal spaces "virtually arising out of themselves"). There is Aristotle's *De generatione animalium*, Avicenna's *Canon* and *De animalibus*, Aristotle's *De anima*, Albertus Magnus' *De animalibus*, Averroës's commentary on the *De anima*. All these prefigure and are confluent in Aquinas's *Summa theologica* which teaches the ways and means of the transformation of spirits into spirit.

The adduction of authorities is far more than instrumental. The progress of understanding from Aristotelian intellection to Thomist certitude, via the privileged indirections of pagan and even Islamic conveyance, is re-enacted in the personal pilgrimage of the *Commedia*. The several and sequent apprehensions available to Virgil, Statius, and the Pilgrim who will proceed beyond Lethe to the conflagration of truth in which Albertus and Aquinas await him, illustrate, organise the ascent of intellect and imagination to revelation. But this revelation is latent, "embryonic" in (an image directly intimated at different moments in this Canto) the inspired analytic labours of the ancients. Thus every facet of the poem relates to a relevant segment of the totality of preceding and contemporary literate expression, and this relation in turn cements, makes one, the fabric of the *Commedia*.

ANOTHER AXIS is that of local habitation and of names. Dante anchors spiritual motion and the ineffable in literal specificity. Spaces are densely material and topographical. In this way the primary meshing of text with context shades into the cognate category of "texture", of the precise pliancies, rugosities, slipperiness or lapidary edge of matter. Rudolf Borchardt's uncanny "translation" of the *Commedia* into archaic German (1904–30) captures this better than any commentary, making of the narrative a laboured voyage into concreteness, into mine-shafts, marl-pits, rock galleries and up gritty

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moraines towards flares and crenellations of celestial light themselves strangely palpable.

Dante knew the ordnance-survey niceties of the Bible and their genius of suggestion. The *bolgia* in Canto XXX of the *Inferno* is "eleven miles around and not less than half a mile across"; the visage of Nimrod in XXXI is as long as the celebrated bronze pine cone which stood originally near the Campus Martius (*i.e.* just over four yards high), and the giant measures *trenta gran palmi*, thirty full spans from the waist down. The width of the terrace in *Purgatorio* X is *misurebbe in tre volte un corpo umano*, which signifies some 16 to 18 feet, using a module which even during the ascendant stages of disincarnation will remain that of the human figure. Such precisions, notably geometric, extend into the fiery heart of the *Paradiso*, setting up a crucial stylistic tension between concreteness and that which is by definition ineffable, unreproducible.

THE VOYAGE HAS A TWOFOLD mapping: internal and North Italian. The two are knit by a tactic of constant reference. These are made to sites, often minute, in the Romagna, Tuscany, Lombardy, the Maremma. The titans in the pit of Hell are like the towers of Montereggioni, a castle on the crown of a low hill eight miles northwest of Siena. Antaeus bends his mighty bulk to pick up Virgil and Dante before depositing them in the final crucible of desolation. Pin-pointing the colossus's gentle stoop, Dante compares it to the Garisenda, one of the leaning towers in Bologna, today 163 feet high and 10 feet out of perpendicular, "when a cloud is passing over it against the direction in which it leans" (an added incisiveness and specification which shows Dante's tactile alertness to the play of light and air, of shadow and vapour against local stone). To make tangible the angles of ascent on the early screes of the Mountain of Purgatory, the Pilgrim cites the path to San Leo, perched on its rock-redoubt in the district of Montefeltro, and the dramatic tabular outcrop of Bismantova, some twenty miles south of Reggio in Emilia. In Canto XI of the *Paradiso* we are not far from the hem of pure fire and insubstantiality. But note how earth-rooted, circumstantial, Baedeker-like is Thomas's invocation of St Francis: Assisi, the rivers Topino and Chiascio, the hills near Gubbio, the gentler, thus more fertile west slope of Mount Subasio, facing Perugia, and the Porta Sole from which one leaves Perugia for the high places. Exactitudes, pedantries, regionalisms which stabilise the leap of the visionary arc and posit authority.

Proper names cascade. The poet crams ever rift of Hell and Purgatory with neighbours, enemies, literati, buggers, relatives, *condottieri*, property developers, lute-players. The silhouettes are often as sharply studied as in any novel, the discriminations hair-fine. The "Spendthrift Brigade" of Siena, a circle of young gluttons, conspicuous consumers of wealth and their own persons, lodge now in hideous discomfort (covered with scabs, their nails running blood) near the nadir of damnation. Yet one of the crew, Lano of the Maconi family, is assigned to an entirely different quarter, the second *girone* of the seventh circle. It is we who cannot puzzle out the precise differentiation. Was it that Lano fell soldier-like in combat near Arezzo?

Or take the famous roll-call of Tuscan families, mostly extinct or grimly diminished, in *Purgatorio* XIV: da Valbona, Mainardi, Carpigna, Lambertazzi, Ubaldini, Tignosi, Traversari, Malvicini, Pagani—wolf-packs, patrons of the arts, lordlings of Bagnacavallo or Castrocaro, of Bertinoro or Forlì, lairs and parched hovels, *castelli* and marches, whose ferocious bustle can be traced in the quarterings of coats of arms, Villani's *Cronica* and Paget Toynbee's Dante dictionary. Again the unifying mechanism is one of compaction, of referential incrustation. The mad extremities of the infernal and the ever-loftier gradations towards disembodiment in the *Purgatorio* are held in place by the prodigality and minuteness of local touch. We trust the teller's tale of the horrors in the thieves' *bolgia* (*Inferno* XXV) because of a pedantic but unforgettable nuance: Puccio Sciancato is tortured by the serpents but *non era mutato*, he alone has suffered no bodily change. A manuscript source recounts that, in distinction from his peers, this particular mafioso committed handsome, urbane thefts (*furti e legiardi*). He belonged to the Galigai family, Ghibellines banished in 1268. Ask anyone.

These nominations, moreover, establish time-coherence. The plural calendars of Dante's own biography, of the life of Beatrice (who dies in June of 1290), of the length of the journey, of the zodiac and of the historical temporalities which recede into the everlasting trajectories of Paradise, overlap, sometimes confusingly. The poet uses the arboreal continuity of families and clans to achieve unity. Often the same house reappears, fathers in Hell, sons in Purgatory, siblings divided between torment and beatitude, first cousins, in-laws flames or terraces apart. The pivot of the scheme is Dante's meeting with his great-great-grandfather in Canto XV of the *Paradiso*, and Cacciaguida's remembrance of times past. Once again the antique names sound: the Ravignani, the Nerli, the Alighieri themselves. The poem is made one ("a crystallographic shape, that is a body").

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The Art of John Martin

William Feaver

The Victorian painter John Martin was a great influence on Charlotte Brontë and Victor Hugo. His extraordinary pictures fell out of fashion and into oblivion after his death, and only in this century has his work been revalued and restored to favour. William Feaver's book assesses Martin's achievement as an artist of remarkable quality and imagination. Illustrated £7

Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound

Translated by James Scully and C. John Herington

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Aeschylus: Suppliants

Translated by Janet Lembke

The poet Janet Lembke restores this neglected tragedy to its rightful place in the Aeschylean canon, recreating it as intense dramatic poetry, designed for speaking as well as hearing and reading. Her introduction offers a new reading of the psychological plot, and in a translator's note she provides an 'postlude' constructed out of the surviving fragments of the other two plays in the trilogy of which *Suppliants* is the lone survivor. £3.95 *Greek Tragedy in New Translations*

The Poet and the Revolution

Aleksandr Blok's *The Twelve*

Sergei Hackel

The career of Aleksandr Blok reached its peak with the writing of *The Twelve* in 1918. It was the first great poem of the Russian Revolution and towers above all others in a period that produced many important poets. This is the first book-length study of it in any language other than Russian. Dr. Hackel sets the poem in its literary, biographical, and historical context, and examines its religious element and Blok's use of colour imagery. £10.50

The Third Adam

Jerzy Peterkiewicz

Is our age to see the revival of religion through the third Adam and the third Eve? If so, a bold experiment carried out in Poland early in this century by a heretical sect, the Mariavites, may have pointed the way. 'A book of great fascination. I admire the humour, the compassion and the honest uncertainty with which the story of this strange sect is told.'—Graham Greene Illustrated £6.95

The Origins of Zionism

David Vital

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Oxford University Press

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The technique and effect is exactly that of the narrator's return to the Guermantes salon, with its formal lament and ironies of recollection, name by name, misalliance, *arrivisme*, extinction heraldically charted, to circumscribe into a single organic mass the immensity of Proust's design. Indeed, the concurrences between the *Commedia* and the actual structure of *Le Temps retrouvé* would repay a close look. In both cases, precise trivia gather to a formidable persuasion. A motion of transcendence, of the internalisation or negation of space and of time, is grounded in immanence, in the roughage and sensory ballast of locale, family scandal, côterie joke, parish idiom. The text is timeless, universal, because utterly dated and placed. Dante and Proust, like no others, give us the gossip of eternity.

A THIRD TRICK of unison is self-evident: all of the *Commedia* echoes and cross-echoes. A covert but unmistakable allusion in line 132 of *Purgatorio* VI reveals to us that the towering peak which Ulysses glimpsed in *Inferno* XXVI is indeed the mountain-island of Purgatory. The Ithacan himself is invoked once again in those breath-stopping verses in Canto XIX of the *Purgatorio*:

> *"Io son," cantava, "io son dolce serena,*
> *che' marinari in mezzo mar dismago;*
> *tanto son di piacere a sentir piena!*
> *Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago*
> *al canto mio; e qual meco s'ausa,*
> *rado sen parte; si tutto l'appago!"*

"I am," she sang, "I am the sweet Siren who leads mariners astray in mid-sea, so full am I of pleasantness to hear. Ulysses, eager to journey on, I turned aside to my song; and whosoever abides with me rarely departs, so wholly do I satisfy him."

Dante kneels before the nearing angel in *Purgatorio* II precisely as he did in *Inferno* IX, 86–7. The oblique reference to Lethe in *Inferno* XIV, 136, will be cleared up only towards the close of the *Purgatorio* (XXVIII, 25–35). From the blessedness of *Paradiso* XI, the Pilgrim ponders the malign follies of men, of those who conduct their lives *per sofismi*. The turn of phrase is meant to recall to us Guido da Montefeltro's confession in Canto XXVII of the *Inferno*. And so on, individual words, elements of syntax, images, specific allusions and gestures chiming and echoing across the entire architecture of the poem in a pattern of responsions which, in its turn, acts out the principles of analogy and anagogy in Dante's interpretation of the world.

Add to this the formal bonds of prosody—the armature of Dante's terza rima allows every sort of placing: symmetrical, chiasmal, inverted, contrapuntal. Add to it also such ligaments as numerology (four for earth, three for the spiritual, twelve for apostles, zodiac, the months) and the mystique of literalism present in such pairings and mirrorings as *ave/Eva*—and you have some of the great axes of cohesion and convergent codes to account for Mandelstam's experience of "stereometric genius", of a "thirteen-thousand-faceted epic" which is one indivisible stanza.

THESE PARTICULARS can be harvested from Charles S. Singleton's new edition.[1] Six volumes, three of text, three of commentary, trim, chastely printed, flattering to the hand as are all Bollingen books. The Italian original, essentially that of Giorgio Petrocchi's *Edizione Nazionale* of 1966–8, is printed on the left and the English prose version on the facing page. Each in turn, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, has its attendant volume of line-by-line gloss, annotation, historical comment, citation of source and main parallels, etc. The format is such that poem and elucidation can be taken in comfortably side by side. The exegesis is not, and is not meant to be, exhaustive. Picking up a volume at random, an Italian colleague pointed out to me that Singleton was perfectly right in quoting Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to show the provenance of one of the monsters in Hell, but that he omitted a passage in Ovid's *Fasti* from which one odd touch in the passage derives. There is an index of proper names but, damagingly, no précis of the kind provided by the old Temple Classics. The bibliography is entirely philological and scholarly.

Indeed the note throughout is one of purism. Under "modern commentators" one finds no T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Osip Mandelstam, R. P. Blackmur or Francis Fergusson; no Erich Auerbach, Stefan George, Rudolf Borchardt or Philippe Sollers—poets, re-readers, exploiters who have helped the *Commedia* live at large. To Professor Singleton, who has expended a lifetime on Dante, the maker of the poem has no match. His was the mind which came nearest of any to an authentic mimesis of "God's created universe and of His providential plan for man and all creatures", an *imitatio* which must have been conceived in its manifold integrity from the very first verse of Canto I. There is still much to be cleared up from a contextual-linguistic point of view (a seventh volume of "Danteana" is promised). But very likely, Professor Singleton would regard the notion of critical retrenchment or revaluation as fatuous.

[1] *The Divine Comedy: Inferno; Purgatorio; Paradiso.* Translated with a commentary by CHARLES S. SINGLETON. Bollingen Series LXXX. 6 vols. Princeton University Press, $30.00, £17.50 for each two-volume part, consisting of Italian text and translation, and commentary.

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The same spirit of ardent submission rules the translation. There are a good many English-language renditions available: Melville B. Anderson, J. D. Sinclair, the Dorothy Sayers-B. Reynolds enterprise, Laurence Binyon (which has more than its share of virtues), the Temple Classics by several hands. Material comparison with Singleton would be easy but pretty pointless. He does not have the real translator's secret itch for parity. He would not offer an interposition, let alone a surrogate for the original. Singleton's is, in the best sense, a dignified trot, an interlinear mildly rounded and neutrally solemn in its cadences. It comes close to Walter Benjamin's paradox that the only great translations are primers, word-by-word interlinears, though the ideal which Benjamin adduces is, by hermetic perversion, Hölderlin's almost inaccessible Sophocles. Singleton's version is carefully inadequate and, therefore, heuristic. The reader is meant to piece out the Italian for himself, using a dictionary and Dante grammar to guess more and more acutely, and leaning on the right-hand page when rescue or confirmation are needed. Professor Singleton's own stance is plain: anyone who is serious about the *Commedia*, which is the touchstone of the human perception of the rationale of mature existence, will take the trouble to trail after Dante in the "noble vulgate." The prose parallel in these volumes is only meant to be Limbo.

But will Professor Singleton's edition find its readers? Does the *Commedia*, even where it is decked out with a more ambitious traduction, imitation or counterpart?

IT WAS WITH REFERENCE to Dante that T. S. Eliot, in 1929, sought to make verifiable the relations between a poet's religious or political doctrines and the reader's enjoyment of the work. Focused as it was on I. A. Richards' theory of "pseudo-statements"—the sort of proposition which is true and persuasive in a given poetic matrix—and on his own motion towards a poetry of Anglican profession, Eliot's argument remains wobbly. One probably has more pleasure, he says, when one shares the poet's convictions. Dante's are of a subtlety and authority to provoke assent, where Shakespeare's often are not. Yet there is also "a distinct pleasure" in responding to poetry whose systematic or implicit ideological content one does not accept. Dante caters to either or both of these possibilities. Somehow—and Eliot is both magisterial and shifty at this juncture—a fair amount of theological-philosophic matter has to be ingested. *In vacuo* disagreement or distaste would be puerile. But whatever one's personal reflex, the aspect of "belief" or "informed dissent" is crucial. Looking back, much of Eliot's worry strikes one as privileged. If we ask now "who among us reads Dante, who is equipped to read him with immediacy, be it either of assent or rejection?", the answers may be less sheltered.

"GREAT LITERATURE is about LIFE": so goes the Lawrentian cliché. Of course it is. But from the Middle Ages until our 20th-century neo-classics and ironic custodians (Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Mann, Valéry) this "aboutness" has been intensely structured. It is an "aboutness" which is itself mediate and literary in two principal ways. The writer in a high culture of received, challenged, unfolding genres will apprehend and filter fundamental responses to "life" through other works. He does not stumble on experience raw. The latitudes and constraints which circumscribe the milieu of his invention, the provocations to metamorphosis, enlargement or critique which he will answer to, are "there" already in the linguistic-literary lineage to which he belongs and which he may want to modify. The stylisation of reflexes can go so deep that the individual "creator" is barely conscious of the fact that experience is reaching him via established conventions or "sets" of aesthetic, technical precedent. (Gombrich has shown how Constable's sight of a particular bit of ground, presumably immediate and fully ocular to Constable himself, in fact derives from a Gainsborough treatment.) Vision is very often re-vision.

The second "mediation" arises from the very notion of "experience", "reality" or "raw material." To many writers and thinkers, though not to all, another text is, or can be, the most naked and charged of life-forces. Such men live most intensely, most vulnerably, in the act of reading, in the shock of encounter with other poems, philosophic arguments, religious tracts, sometimes abstruse and remote in time. It makes no sense in such cases to divide "brute experience" from experience already "booked." For innumerable revolutionaries the quintessential event of being, the epiphany, was the reading of Rousseau or of Marx. What locale, what physical and nervous happening, seemed to Shelley more life-transforming, more existential than a reading of Plato?

DANTE IS SUPREMELY "bookish" in both senses. The relationship to Virgil, Ovid, Statius and Seneca, the exquisitely measured contiguities with or distances from Arnaut, Cavalcanti, Guinizzelli, are the stuff of his existence as man and as poet. Aristotle, Augustine, Aristotle through the sanctified glass of Aquinas, these are not "sources" in any formal auxiliary way,

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but bodies of lived meaning, animate spaces of understanding and emotion in which Dante's sensibility registers its own pulse. Whatever the Middle Ages knew of classic and Hellenistic letters, of Greek, Roman and Islamic scientific-metaphysical doctrine, the entire corpus of patristic and canonic exegetics, the literature of the Provençal school and the "new style"—all these are gathered into the *Commedia* at the most direct level of cerebral, nervous, sensory experience. The concept of allusion or analogue is totally inadequate. To Dante these other texts are the organic context of identity. They are as directly about life as life is about them.

Now it is just this fusion, this immersion in being and understanding via other texts, which we are ill equipped or inclined to handle. Fewer and fewer of us "read" in Dante's sense of utter self-bestowal and re-vision. The post-romantic, post-Nietzschean scenario is one of untutored spontaneity, of impulses from the vernal wood outweighing libraries. The assumption that previous letters and philosophy can be decisive inscape (Hopkins the Thomist), that the "book of life" may indeed have printed pages, has been made to seem mandarin. We can no longer simulate Dante's *moto spirituale* and physical dwelling inside the *Aeneid* in the sensible construct of the *Summa* or next to Statius' *Thebaid*. We simply no longer read what Dante and the house of European intellect supposed to be the shared alphabet of reason and recognition. References, citations, implicit parallels which make up the constant texture of the *Commedia*, have to be looked up. This exercise, if one is at all conscientious about it, proves covertly destructive. The poem recedes as the footnotes thicken and grow more insistently elementary. The astringency and sheer speed of Dante's narrative, the lucid tautness which harries forward even clotted episodes of abstruse inquiry, are fatally lost. Second-handedness and stale academicism interpose.

CONDITIONED, MOREOVER, by an aesthetic of the fragmentary, of the "original", of the open-ended, we balk at the omnivorous authority, at the formal *clôture* of the *Commedia*. These reactions probably disable us in regard to the whole epic mode. We no longer turn with ease to "long" poems. We have relegated to the display case that central axis of imaginative, intellectual and political summation which extends from Homer and Virgil to Milton, Klopstock and the Victor Hugo of the *Légende des siècles* and of those last, unread, stunning epics on God and Satan. We scarcely glance at the "epics on the epic" produced by Boiardo, Ariosto and Tasso, though it is precisely this current which energises much of English romantic literature and Byron in particular. Who, today, reads Camoens's *Lusiads*, that bracing pageant of which *different* English translations were published in 1826, 1853, 1854, 1877, 1878 and 1880? It is the cunning genius of Pound's *Cantos* (in this respect so intimately heir to Browning's long poems) to quarry the epic convention while staying bitty, idiosyncratic, incomplete and radically egotistical in the modern anti-epic vein.

THIS SLIPPING OUT OF FOCUS pertains also to the "miscroscopic." Consider the phases of the Pilgrim's leavetaking from Virgil towards the close of the *Purgatorio*.

At the end of Canto XXVII, Virgil defines the limits of his own ethical and intellectual apprehension. He now "crowns" and "mitres" Dante "over yourself"—*te sovra te corono e mitrio*—an intricate turn of phrase pointing to the supreme degree of inner justice, of imperial discipline and self-governance to which Virgil, the pre-eminent Augustan, has conducted his charge. A scarcely accented nuance in line 4 of XXVIII tells us that Dante, for the very first time in the journey, takes the lead on his own. In line 56 of the following Canto, he who has almost invariably been titled *maestro* or *duca* is now only *buon Virgilio*. At the approach of Beatrice, "clad in the hue of living flame", Dante turns one last time to his erstwhile mentor but refers to him simply as "Virgil." Yet never has the *Aeneid* itself been more radiantly present. "I know the signs of the ancient ardour" says Dante as the veiled lady nears. He is quoting directly from Dido to Anna in Book IV, 23: *adgnosco veteris vestigia flammae*.Then comes the tercet of formal valediction which names Virgil thrice and bestows on him the final dignity of *dolcissimo patre*. This triple invocation belongs to two unifying sets: that of numerological balance (he is to be named one last time by Beatrice, giving us a deliberate 1+3+1 pattern), and that of classic precedent (the threefold appellation of Eurydice in Virgil's *Georgics* IV, 525-27, a poignant mirroring of an earlier loss and infernal descent). Thus we have echo inside echo and a *diminuendo* in which every interval is minutely controlled.

The craft required is one of sophisticated "audition." It demands not only extreme concentration but an ability to keep in mind, to maintain in sub-surface motion, the local detail while perceiving the design as a whole. However muted, it may be no more than a shift of tense or case, the present singularity must be kept in dynamic play against the major lineaments and elevations. The recognition of the submerged

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quote or pastiche, the grasp of contiguity and reciprocal qualification between moments in the text which may be far apart, must be quick and accurate but also unobtrusive, so as not to break the dominant pace.

THE REQUISITE HABITS of notation and pleasure are not arcane, merely obsolete. We have largely discarded the sense of poetry as a medium of natural universality. Functions of technical information, historical record, analytic argument, which are integral and obvious to Dante's use of verse are now almost completely a part of the "prosaic." We lack the silences (around, inside us), the deep-breathing fixity of total regard, without which that delicately resonant criss-cross of remembrance and shock on which the meaning of Virgil's going hinges cannot be heard. We inhabit noise-levels, bursts of static, stimuli of a kind which renders artificial, if not impossible, the necessary immersion in and self-gathering towards the jealous exigencies of Dante's text.

On a routine level: we no longer learn by heart and our textual memories are skin-deep. But in its organic recourse to previous poetry, to mythology, to topographical and chronological markers, it is on memory that Western high literature, and the epic especially, relies. Reading responsibly one not only spots the citation but, out of a trained, focused silence, speaks the next line. The exact retrieval of the Virgil invocations in XXVII and XXVIII is made, almost unconsciously, when we pick up the motif in Cantos XXIX and XXX. Musicians have active memory in their lips and fingers, over great runs and intricacies of material. So had the reader whom Dante intended, or Heidegger when reading Hölderlin and Trakl. But overall, the needed silences, literacies, inhibitions of distraction, acceptances of verse as a central public idiom, on all of which the current vitality of the *Commedia* depends, are either lapsed or, more grimly, restricted to the specialist. Thus there is in the largesse of Professor Singleton's presentation more than a hint of melancholy, of doubt as to those whom his labours might serve.

BUT THERE ARE inherent barriers as well. The *Divina Commedia* exhibits a tenacious streak of sadism. To be sure, times were ferocious. Counterfeiters, failed astrologers, mavericks of diverse persuasions were burnt alive. According to the edict of banishment, Alighieri himself would have been if the authorities had snatched him on Florentine ground. Starvation, the vengeance of mercenaries and mobs on whole communities, individual refinements of terror were commonplace. Hence the monumental vehemence of petty ambush, street-brawl or family mayhem in the calendar of Tuscan life. But there is in Dante's complexion a more obscure, philosophical cruelty. He is a virtuoso of pain, as if to counterpoise the exceeding suavity and femininity of his love-poetry and *Vita Nuova*. He lingers over torment, and adds. Corso Donati's demise, as reported in Villani's history, is ugly enough. Forese's prophecy (*Purgatorio* XXIV, 82ff) embroiders. The detested captain of the exiled Neri faction is dragged to Hell at the tail of a horse, his body lashed about and hideously disfigured. Commentators have tried to give the passage an allegoric varnish; but it is unmistakably literal. It is Dante visiting chastisement on one whom he sees as a traitor. The loving specificities of torture in the *Inferno* are renowned. Medieval frescoes of after-life (at Torcello, in Siena, in the Umbrian churches), Church sermons, popular beliefs, abound in similar agonies. But again, it is the fine-nerved probing of Dante's art, the nobility of the performative idiom, which makes the effect blacker and more personal. The man's proud heart is in it.

Coming after the Nazi-Stalinist blood-sports, we are less ready to tune in with these sanctified bestialities. We sense today to what subterranean but cumulative extent the Christian teaching and vision of everlasting, sterile incarceration and punishment in Hell prefigures, perhaps made potentially real, the method of the concentration camps. There is something beside travesty in the Nazi proposition that the camps were merely "Hell above ground." Dante's is the loftiest part, yet a part none the less, of a long reverie on omnipotence and pain. Dreams can turn to habit.

AT THE OTHER END, no amount of commentary pointing to concreteness, to dramatic tension, will make the *Paradiso* fully accessible. The tremolo is so long-sustained, the effulgence so unwavering, as to produce, however we take it, a banality of the sublime. The lobby-politics, visceral processes and artillery which Milton implants in Heaven are an attempt to liven what is, fundamentally, an intractable topic. Some element of real presence ebbs out of the *Commedia*, at least for the non-theologian, once the lady Matelda has wafted us over Lethe. We have, complains Eliot, "a prejudice against beatitude as material for poetry."

The trouble lies deeper. The verbal exchanges in Paradise are tautologies, harmonious reiterations of certitude. Living speech must have in it the shadow-side and roughage of possible duplicity. In Hell and Purgatory, Dante compels us to listen and read between the lines. In Paradise such wariness would be blasphemous. As perfect verity burns through it, the medium

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pales. There is, therefore, more than allegory to Dante's use of babytalk, as he approaches the rose of fire. We are out of line with the hymnal innocence, the cherubim, the low-content magnificats—poetical, plastic, orchestral—of the Victorians and Pre-Raphaelites. Eliot insisted that he had "revolted" against Rossetti and, by inference, against Rossetti's version of Dante; but he was nearer to it than we.

Whatever the reasons, the fact is obvious: Dante is fairly well absent from the syllabus, from the currency of pleasure and implicitness which make a classic text ramify into daily feeling. He comes to us in snippets or at second hand. (Do Italians still read the *Commedia*?)

YET WE NEED NOT COMMIT the heresy of viewing our own time as of singular, tragically-elect significance to notice that there is in the *Commedia* much that concerns us. Dante remains the master welder of poetry to politics. He conjoins the disinterested criteria of the literary and philosophic imagination to the partisan grit and myopia of political activism. He knows, he instructs us, that the claims of political constraint and manoeuvre are, at the level of individual conscience, largely spurious; that violence makes systematic the inchoate tug of opportunism. Poetry must make shapeliness of politics if these are to be endured. But not past a certain point; otherwise a false comeliness will do as apologia for inhumanity and muddle. No other writer, not Dostoevsky or Conrad, though they come close, has matched Dante's simultaneous response to the opposed criteria of ideological elegance (the imperial paradigm, the ideal of civic *dignitas*) and of the technical, empirical actuality of power. To come down to "relevance": it is in the *Commedia* that the logic of a European union has its best substance.

Another issue, sharply of our time, is that of the reach of language in respect of abstraction, particularly scientific. How far can non-specialised speech include, harness to general sensibility and personal judgment, the codes of the natural and applied sciences? Can the proliferating enormities—the term being one of dimension as well as of moral and psychological potential—of biology, physics, medicine, cosmology, be brought back, even if only via metaphor, into the vulgate? If no such repatriation is feasible, ordinary discourse will find itself ever more isolated from the new models of reality, from the new patterns of "true" sense as they are expressed in the mathematical and formal dialects of the scientist. The sciences, in turn, will find themselves absurdly eccentric to the home ground of general cognisance. The early 14th-century condition was obviously less polarised than our own. But in its own terms, Dante's encompassing of the technical, extending from his sure grasp of the esoteric routines of tinker and tailor to his metaphoric "packaging" of physiology, alchemy, astronomy, remains exemplary. No writer has surpassed him in incorporating and giving tactile authority to scientific-metaphysical speculations. Reading the *Commedia* we learn of the several ways in which symbol, analogue, simile, metaphor and trope can translate abstruse knowledge and "technicity" into common feeling. The challenge has nagged since Pope's adroit domestication of Newtonian celestial mechanics. Dante suggests that even the outermost reconnaissance of science or philosophic hypothesis can, must be retrieved for the human imagination, and that poetry is the natural voice of recall.

HOMECOMING is decisive. Glancing at the extravagant range of allusion and cosmological spaces in the *Commedia*, Péguy rounded on "Dante, ce *globe-trotter*." But the centre is in fact magnetic and reductive: *Toscana sonò tutta*. Thus nothing in the whole epic is more charged with meaning than the wrench of homesickness at the start of *Paradiso* XXV. In the middle of the blaze of transcendent felicity, the poet dreams of his return to the "fair sheepfold." All pastoral is an attempt to come home. This is why the choice of words in this supreme passage is so exact:

> *del bello ovile ov' io dormi' agnello,*
> *nimico ai lupi che li danno guerra.*
>
> from the fair sheepfold where I slept as a lamb,
> an enemy to the wolves which war on it. . . .

We have seen how even in nether Hell citizenships are minutely noted. A man is of this borough, shire, mountain-eyrie. The *Commedia* becomes a great spiral and peregrination of return. We are, just now, visibly dislocated. Our landscapes are cannibalised and ephemeral. Poetry tells of a man's "housedness" in his past and self. It would find him at home in the skin of his speech and among the objects, organisms, terrains which circle his being. Poetry grafts boundlessness on to the familiar, irreducible branch. Dante's sole never leaves the ground (let the pun be). The *Divina Commedia* performs that mystery of rooted motion without which there is no public sense or private weight to our lives.

Either we yield to *la bufera infernale*, the sinister whirlwind, or start heading for home. The dark wood is not a bad place in which to begin.

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French History, Anglo-Saxon Attitudes—By DOUGLAS JOHNSON

IN A RECENT Yearbook of Urban History, four historians from the University of Lancaster urged their colleagues to put their trust in groups. It is vanity, they claim, for any one man to imagine that he can provide an adequate account of a large city. Is this so? If it is, then the principle must be applied to a good many other aspects of history, and amongst the multitude of historians must be numbered those British and American historians who, without resort to group work, are concerning themselves with the complexities and controversies of French history. In spite of its difficulties, and dangers, the popularity of French history is considerable, and it is striking to contrast the number of British and Americans working on this subject with the relatively few French scholars who have turned to British or American history. With a few honourable exceptions the French appear to have lost the tradition of Guizot, Elie Halévy and Petit-Dutaillis.

If one were to try to generalise about the British and American approach to French history one would probably suggest a common characteristic. Most of these historians are not only attempting to study some precisely defined area of the French past, they are usually trying to relate it to the wider problems of French history and to some deeper explanation of the nature of change in French society. Perhaps the British and Americans have profited from the fact that they did not have to produce the massive French doctoral thesis, which, until recently at least, was at the centre of most historical research in France and which obliged its authors to expatiate in boundless detail on a particular subject. At all events they have had a tendency to be more interpretative, and perhaps to be bolder in pointing to more general conclusions. This is in contrast to earlier British historians, and observers, who were more dependent on the work of French scholars and who often confined their own attitudes to a disapproval of many of the events and of what was sometimes called the "unfraternal" tradition of French history (a favourite quotation was that attributed to Metternich, who said that fraternity as it was practised in France had led him to the conclusion that if he had a brother he would call him cousin). Even such a sympathetic observer as J. E. C. Bodley, writing his account of France at the end of the 19th century, was struck by the presence in the Luxembourg Palace of a picture showing the death of the young Barra in the Vendéen war. This, for him, was not only a sign of the blood-stained records of the Republic, it was also a sign of French officialdom wishing to demonstrate that the French past was filled with examples of how the French had been cruel to the French: "*Gallus Gallo lupus*" as he put it.

Such fastidiousness no longer exists among British scholars, and indeed it seems likely that British and American historians can achieve a greater objectivity than do some of their French counterparts. In the study of the French Revolution, for example, whereas it remains customary for French historians to dispose themselves in camps which, roughly speaking, reflect their attitudes towards the Revolution rather than their interests in particular aspects of it, such alignments would scarcely be feasible among British or American scholars.

ALL HISTORIANS THESE DAYS are ambitious to add new dimensions to the well-established features of their craft, and one common feature of this is to explore history from below, to recover and reconstruct the world of the undocumented and inarticulate. This is occurring in the work on French history, and amongst the books which have been published over the last twelve months, there are two outstanding examples. Natalie Zemon Davis, in her eight studies of popular attitudes and mentalities, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*,[1] tells us that she has a

[1] *Society and Culture in Early Modern France.* By NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS. Duckworth, £9.80; Stanford University Press, $12.50.

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continuous concern with the lives of those who are "modest." Olwen Hufton, in *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750–1789*,[2] asks who were the poor, why they were there, and which areas faced the greater challenge of poverty. But this concern, and this questioning, is not an end in itself, and both writers, dealing with that section of the population that was numerically outstandingly important in the societies which they are studying, relate their investigation to issues which affect the general understanding of history.

Thus Professor Davis, when she writes about the print-workers in Lyon and their reactions to Protestantism, is discussing the sort of social experience which could help form Protestant consciousness among male artisans. She emphasises the confidence which the print-workers felt in their work as artisans, and it is this, rather than any significant correlation between socio-economic position and religion which is important. We probably do not need to be told that when skilled workers sang psalms in the streets, they were not trying to win higher wages. There was no apparent connection between their attempts to better themselves professionally and their choice of religion. If one considers how certain occupations appear to have been over-represented in the Protestant movement relative to their distribution in the population as a whole, then one finds that it is the métiers where skills were involved, or in which there was innovation and novelty, such as printing or goldsmith's work, which were attracted towards Protestantism. This is because these distinctive skills, and she includes literacy amongst them, facilitated men's consciousness (she uses the word "observation") of religious matters; because as groups many of these artisans had travelled fairly widely and were cosmopolitan; and because they were living in the city of Lyon, which had a long lay tradition and such a tradition of rebellion that the term for popular revolt in Lyon had a special name (*rebeine*). It was for these reasons, and in these circumstances, that the print-workers and their masters opted for Protestantism.

But the story does not end there. Subsequently they found Calvinism too severe, and they resented the fact that the Consistory objected to many of their customs; indeed, to the very close-knit nature of their organised group. Hence it was that they returned, if somewhat lukewarmly, to the Catholic Church (possibly influenced too by the evidence that this Church was showing remarkable strength). We are shown an episode in religious history, and one which in French terms is particularly interesting because it describes how a group created a communal relationship among themselves. In other essays, when she is writing about youth groups, about violence as a form of social behaviour, about the forms of poverty which were considered admissable, about women in urban environments, Professor Davis is also pointing to the complex social structure, with its many different kinds of power, cohesion and hierarchy.

IT COULD BE that Professor Davis is too apt to impose a sociological concept upon the lower orders of 16th-century France, and perhaps she admits this implicitly when she says that historians of popular culture do not respect the way people lived, and in that sense have difficulty in understanding them. Professor Hufton cannot be criticised in the same way. Possibly because she has greater archival resources, she is able to let the people speak for themselves. But her conclusion is one of astonishment that the poor were able to survive at all, and it is when she is surveying the many expedients devised by the poor in their struggle to exist (and she writes about vagrancy, theft, prostitution, smuggling, child abandonment) that she comes across the link between festivity and violence. Perhaps French historians have been reluctant to examine the problem of violence (although there have been some exceptions) because they have preferred to depict violence as if it were the product of the Revolution, or because they do not wish to show the future sovereign people of the 18th century in an unworthy light.

The most common interpretation of the Revolution to find its way into history textbooks still remains the class interpretation, and for that reason one form of popular violence is acceptable, that is to say the grain or food riot. But Professor Hufton prefers to see beyond this. She writes about the ritual which surrounded a meaningless, gratuitous violence, and about "the ingrained violence of the working classes." There were some areas where the authorities claimed that they were fully occupied simply keeping the peace between rival gangs at fairs, and it would appear that if the fearsome life of the poor was accompanied by a compulsive desire to celebrate on public holidays, *Fête*-days and other occasions for gathering together, then these celebrations were accompanied by violent confrontations of the young. One village would attack another, the young men sometimes walking long distances in order to do so. This was a sport which could result in severe injury, and even in loss of life, and the families of those who had been mutilated or killed could claim compensation in the courts; but villagers would never give evidence against their own, and, as the author puts it, the usual

[2] *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750–1789*. By OLWEN HUFTON. Oxford University Press, £9.00, $29.00.

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practice was to seek revenge on the next occasion. Violence in the towns was different. If for the farm workers violence was part of the ritual of holiday, and if for the rural poor it was by force rather than by litigation that they could defend themselves and their rights, in the towns the traditional village feuds and faction fights tended to become meaningless as old loyalties were blurred, the force of the law was nearer, the young did not always have leisure, or, if they did, had more ways of enjoying themselves. But both in the countryside and in the town, Professor Hufton shows us in the poor a whole population which has established its own codes of behaviour, its own sets of interests, loyalties and tolerance.

IN HIS LATEST BOOK, *Paris and its Provinces, 1792–1802*,[3] Richard Cobb also lets the documents speak for themselves, and continues to reject any attempt to impose some quantitative or sociological framework on his free-ranging account of travelling into and out of Paris (although he does deal with other themes, this is the principal thread to his work). When one reflects on such a book as this, one is struck by the distance which separates this sort of approach from that of most French scholars. The distinction is not one of erudition, although Professor Cobb's knowledge of the archival resources for certain periods of French Revolution must remain unequalled, but it is rather that he is able to enjoy his history and to be seen enjoying it. He revels in the dramatic, the picturesque and the individual, and captures them from the archives. In contrast the predominant French approach to the Revolution, and one which has influenced most historians at some time, is one which insists on clarity. Starting from the premise that the Revolution was one of the great turning points in the history of mankind, believing that it has to take its place in the evolution from feudalism to capitalism, and convinced that it was the culmination of a long social, economic and political development, French historians invoke important social forces and point to a series of general crises in order to explain such a vital event. The greatness of the happening must be accompanied by appropriately great causes and consequences, even when one makes allowance for the trivial and the accidental. The emphasis is on the need to establish with rigorous clarity events which must be treated as portentous.

But this is not Professor Cobb's view. It is as if he has chosen to forget about the importance of the moment, for he cultivates the small

[3] *Paris and its Provinces, 1792–1802*. By RICHARD COBB. Oxford University Press, £5.25, $17.50.

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occurrence, the *fait divers*, the everyday happening. He is not concerned with the dialectics of revolution; he prefers to think of the adventure of people on the road, their hopes, fears, opportunities. It is as if he transforms his people into Gidéen characters, in search of the unknown. The categories are endless, as he tells us about men who are hoping to seduce women, women hoping for a profitable encounter with some wealthy cattle dealer, about the groups of travellers (fish merchants for example) whose journeys are regular occurrences and who have to come to agreements with the authorities. An individual is assassinated, a number of travellers in a coach have a quarrel and there is a law-suit (he is one of the first historians to use conversation as historical evidence), rural people show their hatred of strangers, Parisians shiver with apprehension as they look on the world of savagery which lies beyond the familiar areas of their city. We are shown banditry as being the expression of geographical facts, the frontier districts which surround every city as being the meeting-places of endless uncertainties and confusions. We are a long way from those who explain causes and consequences with neatness and clarity. The only conclusion is that habit can accustom people to almost everything. But the reader is wiser as well as being better informed.

IN ANOTHER SPHERE, British historians have been in the vanguard of one of the most fruitful developments in the study of French history. This has come from the realisation that it is the regions and the provinces which are of outstanding importance in any consideration of the Ancien Régime, or of Revolutionary France. French historians used to interpret the Revolution as an affirmation of the French nation and they used to scrutinise most closely those events which took place in Paris. This has changed; regional history has become respectable as historians have realised that a basic theme to revolutionary government is the nature of relations between Paris and the provinces, between the central administrators and the people. In these circumstances it has become natural to turn to the great urban centres which grew so rapidly in the course of the 18th century.

Bordeaux, for example, was a town which had acquired wealth and commercial success, it was a significant political centre, and it was an economic agglomeration which was unusually sensitive to change and crisis. A group of talented local scholars have been working on this history, but it is noticeable that two important studies have recently appeared in English. William Doyle, with *The Parlement of Bordeaux and the End of*

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the Old Régime, 1771–1790,[4] has produced the first socio-political analysis in depth, and in *Society and Politics in Revolutionary Bordeaux* Alan Forrest has written the first overall examination of the city's politics in terms of the Revolution.[5] Both point to the particular nature of Bordeaux within the national framework. The possession of a parlement was a great source of regional pride, and in a city where the legal profession must have formed a tightly knit fraternity numbering several thousand, then everything that concerned the rights of the region against centralised government, and everything that concerned the complicated legal procedures that surrounded local traditions and privileges, was the subject of acute interest.

IT IS DR DOYLE'S contention that it is precisely this local consciousness and these purely local loyalties which endowed the parlement's position with strength. But equally this was the reason which explains the wider failure of the parlements to evolve an effective political philosophy or system. They reacted defensively to a government which was determined on reform, and this defence, made up of expedients rather than principles and of local solutions to problems which existed on a national scale, was a measure of a failure in the prevailing political culture. Dr Forrest, in his book, emphasises the continuity of events in Bordeaux and describes a revolution which was moderate and conservative. Only in the Federalist revolt of 1793 does he find the lawyers and merchants ready to rebel and to break the law. But again, this was not because of any adherence to a coherent philosophy, whether counter-revolutionary or monarchist, but because of local conditions and because of a particular way of viewing these conditions. It is clear, whether we are dealing with the violent crimes, usually contained and dealt with within the local community, or whether we are talking about the notabilities who were in charge of their cities, that the impact and the shock of a centralised authority was greater than historians have allowed for. Among two of the orthodoxies of French historical writing, the one seeing the rise of Robespierre as a largely natural and inevitable process, the other seeing it as the result of some sort of accidental *dérapage*, these two accounts of society and politics in Bordeaux suggest a different sort of reality.

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[4] *The Parlement of Bordeaux and the End of the Old Régime, 1771–1790*. By WILLIAM DOYLE. Ernest Benn, £8.75; St Martin's Press, $21.95.

[5] *Society and Politics in Revolutionary Bordeaux*. By ALAN FORREST. Oxford University Press, £8.00, $25.75.

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THE PERIOD OF THE DIRECTORY has been neglected for a long time. It was convenient to consider French history after the death of Robespierre either as a betrayal of the ideals of the Year II, or as a corrupt and disheartening prelude to Bonapartism and the Empire. This attitude is in process of being revised, and British and American historians have played an important part in renewing the study of the period. This is only fitting, since it was a British historian who was among the first, more than 40 years ago, to attack the myth of the Directory's weakness and venality. Martin Lyons, in *France under the Directory*,[6] specifically states that he is continuing the process of demystification which was started by Goodwin, and he sets out to study the Thermidorean and Directorial régimes in their own right; while M. J. Sydenham, in *The First French Republic, 1792–1804*,[7] consciously rebels against the habit of abruptly ending the history of the Revolution in 1794 or in 1795.

Neither of these books is the result of the sort of research which distinguishes the work of the historians to whom reference has already been made, but the interpretations are none the less important. To terminate the history of the Revolution with the death of Robespierre is to suppose, implicitly at least, that what the Revolution was about is to be studied in the years 1792 to 1794, and is to suggest that there were a number of revolutionaries in France who had certain specific aims and that the history of these years is that of their attempting to achieve these aims. As Professor Sydenham puts it, there is no reason why either the period before 1792 or the period after 1794 should not be equally revealing about the real nature of the Revolution.

It is true that the Directory is one of these régimes which suffers from the ease with which one identifies its enemies and the difficulty of defining its supporters. It is also a régime which enjoyed various successes in the field of legislation which can be pointed out, and which exists with a certain perspective in French history because some of its characteristics were reproduced in the Second and Third Republics, but which nevertheless was unsuccessful. It was overthrown by a military coup, and no historian can deny that the advent of Napoleon Bonaparte went a long way to transforming the scene. But the idea is gaining ground, and both these historians echo it, that the 18 Brumaire was not the real turning point. The transition from Directory to Consulate is one which emphasises continuity. It is the advent of the Empire which constitutes the real break, or at all events it is Bonaparte's success in governing arbitrarily from the end of 1801.

Perhaps British historians find it easier to appreciate the Directory than do their French counterparts. An imperfect parliamentary régime which saw a bourgeois élite resume its authority, a determination to protect property rights, and the hope that the gains of revolution could be guaranteed by a narrowly based political oligarchy—all have a certain familiarity. Martin Lyons writes about the wide inequalities of wealth which the Directory tolerated, and his chapter on "*les maigres*" shows how famine, inflation and the collapse of public charitable institutions aggravated the miseries of the poor. Professor Sydenham writes particularly about the internal conflicts within the ruling political class, its distrust of the electorate and the way in which it offended many of its supporters by illegalities. It could be that in the future British historians will also follow up those aspects which have been shown to be important in the earlier periods and examine the Directory's attempt to come to terms with the political realities of the provinces (all the more so because a number of French historians have written on individual departments during the period of the Directory).

[6] *France under the Directory*. By MARTIN LYONS. Cambridge University Press, £7.90, paper £2.50; $22.50, paper $6.95.

[7] *The First French Republic, 1792–1804*. By M. J. SYDENHAM. Batsford, £5.00; University of California Press, $13.00.

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Such a study would be in the tradition of Cobb, Doyle and Forrest.

BEFORE LEAVING the subject of the Revolution, and bearing in mind the French reputation for producing outstanding works of *haute vulgarisation*, it is appropriate to point to a short, illustrated history which surveys the whole field from 1789 to 1799 and which probably betters in clarity and good sense any similar publication. Norman Hampson is well-known for his studies of the Enlightenment and Robespierre, and *The French Revolution: A Concise History*[8] is well in the tradition of British historians when he examines the myths which surround this movement. Not a great blood-letting, not the destroyer of the nobility, not the transformation from one sort of economic power to another: the Revolution was none of these things. He describes it rather as an episode which put an end to a way of life, but which was essentially the appeal, by revolutionaries, to a set of principles which they believed to be universal. Thus the Revolution was vital for France, for Europe and for the Atlantic world.

WHEN ONE GOES BEYOND the Revolution into the 19th century, then the historian is freed from the need to understand a gigantic series of gigantic events but faced with the problem of unravelling a series of paradoxes. The French state is strong, but fragile; revolution is frequently invoked, but regularly avoided or reversed; nationalism is a constant force, but social and ideological differences within the nation have multiplied; economic progress has taken place, but without modifying the centralised, bureaucratic authority of the state; foreign policy is important, and is linked to the process of enhancing national self-esteem, but for post-Napoleonic France, wars were either difficult or unsuccessful. British and American historians, considering the problems which arise from these paradoxes, can of course use their well-tried and customary methods of estimating and explaining this interplay of tradition and change. Roger Price in *The Economic Modernisation of France, 1730-1880*,[9] sees certain aspects of the economy as determining the essential nature of French society. Rigid social structures, local particularisms, archaic economic techniques—all survived as a result of poor communications, which prevented the creation of large markets and competitive pressures. But with the railway revolution, according to Mr Price, this compartmentalisation, which was the fundamental characteristic of the ancien régime, began to disappear. Possibly Mr Price underestimates the resistance to change, which helps to make some of the paradoxes, and one should turn to the more detailed case study of the glass workers, who experienced the full effects of social and economic transformation as their trade turned from being skilled, and somewhat isolated, to being semi-skilled and politically militant. An American historian, Joan Wallach Scott has carefully reconstructed the experience of these men in her book *The Glassworkers of Carmaux*.[10]

BUT THERE ARE NEW and more experimental methods of writing history. Thomas D. Beck, in his *French Legislators, 1800–1834*,[11] has carried out an exercise in quantitive history in order to analyse the composition of the lower house of the French Parliament, and to show how the political situation became transformed as new generations, new groups of professions, and new élites came into power. Charles Tilly, and his relatives who have concerned themselves with Italy and Germany, has studied collective action in *The Rebellious Century, 1830–1930*,[12] and has come to the conclusion that large social changes which have taken place have led to the creation of new solidarities and new structures of power. Theodore Zeldin, in *Ambition, Love and Politics*, the first volume of his major work, *France, 1848–1945*,[13] has avoided narrative, and has examined not only the different groups which made up French society, but has looked at intimate sentiments, aspirations and assertions. The theme is diversity, whether it be social, economic, sexual, religious, or regional. The framework remains national, since the subject is France.

In one of his many manifestos, Lucien Febvre complained that there were too many historians who were conscientious, industrious and well educated, who wrote history as their grandmothers had applied themselves to the most finicky of tapestry-work, and who only sought to find out

[8] *The French Revolution: A Concise History*. By NORMAN HAMPSON. Thames and Hudson, £4.25.
[9] *The Economic Modernisation of France, 1730–1880*. By ROGER PRICE. Croom Helm, £6.95.
[10] *The Glassworkers of Carmaux*. By JOAN WALLACH SCOTT. Harvard University Press, £6.00, $10.00.
[11] *French Legislators, 1800–1834*. By THOMAS D. BECK. University of California Press, £7.55, $13.75.
[12] *The Rebellious Century, 1830–1930*. By CHARLES TILLY, LOUISE TILLY, RICHARD TILLY. J. M. Dent, £6.00.
[13] Theodore Zeldin, *France, 1848–1940*, Vol. I (Oxford University Press, 1973). See Anthony Hartley, "Was France a Success?", ENCOUNTER (November 1973).

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what had happened. British and American historians—sufficiently vain, according to some, to work as individuals—are certainly productive in the field of French history. But their success is all the more striking because they are ambitious. They seek to understand and to explain, and it is to be hoped that the French read them. If so, then they will have been really successful.

Rescuing the Past

Medieval Archaeology — By DAVID M. WILSON

IN JANUARY 1971 more than 700 people attended the inaugural meeting of an institution which became known as *Rescue*. Born of the environmental lobbying of the late 'sixties, *Rescue* was to become an energetic and successful pressure group for archaeology in Britain. The familiar doom-laden prose of conservationists achieved fresh sparkle in the hands of this new organisation. It challenged effectively, if rudely, official attitudes towards archaeological excavation of threatened sites. Its officers marched in on ministers and civil servants, appeared on television, set up local pressure groups, and generally raised hell. Partly as a result of their pressure £450,000 was paid by the government in 1972–3 for rescue excavation, double the previous year's figure. In 1973–4 this figure was nearly doubled again to £800,000, while in 1974 more than a million was paid out.

At the beginning of the campaign the organisers conceived a book, and Penguin Books were persuaded to publish it. Towards the end of 1974 it came out, nearly 18 months late. It is an avowed pamphlet,[1] written white-hot by a group of enthusiasts, some professional, some amateur. The descriptions of the destruction of Britain's archaeological heritage, however, have lost their force; yesterday's campaign literature has become tedious prose. Only occasionally does the book come to life, as in the well-documented Scottish story told by Iain Crawford—only 1.8 per cent of the national excavation cake in 1967–8 went to Scotland, a figure which still shocks as the position is little better today. It is all here: destruction by motorway, by developer, by quarrying, by gas trunk-lines, by deep ploughing and by mineral extraction—and it tells a sad story. But our memory is short. It seems incredible that there were more than 700 people at that first meeting—now *Rescue* might raise a quarter of that number.

Through the action of *Rescue* and similar bodies, however, our conscience was stirred and archaeology was reorganised in England. Ponderous Area Advisory Committees on archaeology have been set up by the Minister to advise a National Advisory Committee, to advise the Ancient Monuments Board on academic aspects of excavation policy (so much advice!). Throughout the country permanent archaeological units have been established to rescue a fraction of our disappearing history by survey and excavation. Archaeology is still short of money, destruction is still going on; but if there is a shortage of money for the digger, there is also a lack of money for development, for road-building and tunnelling. There is consequently less quarrying and, because of the recession, less mineral extraction. *Rescue* has to justify itself again; their book was out-dated even before it was published. Pamphlets are for today; the publication of results is what is now needed, and these are gradually coming—but very slowly.

ONE OF THE MOST AMBITIOUS *Rescue* projects was a survey of threatened sites in the City of London.[2] Among the practical recommendations of this report was the establishment of a professional archaeological unit for the City to investigate the remaining undeveloped areas of London which will largely be built over by the late 1980s. This recommendation is now partly implemented—largely as the result of this survey—and excavations on the waterfront, on Baynard's Castle, and on other city sites have produced more information than has been recovered for many years concerning post-Roman London. The *Rescue* report rightly pointed out the academic desirability of investigating the post-Roman and particularly the Anglo-Saxon city. Point has been added to this recommendation by the publication of the late Anglo-Saxon and early post-Conquest volume of a new history of London,[3] which

[1] *Rescue Archaeology*. Edited by PHILIP ARTHUR RAHTZ. Penguin, 90p.

[2] *The Future of London's Past*. By MARTIN BIDDLE, DAPHNE M. HUDSON and C. HEIGHWAY. Rescue (15a Bull Plain, Hertford), £3.50.

[3] *London 800–1216: The Shaping of a City*. By CHRISTOPHER BROOKE and GILLIAN KEIR. Secker & Warburg, £8.

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emphasises the great gaps in our knowledge of the city. The historical sources are here synthesised and a trace element of archaeology has been gently added.

The survey is, as far as the historian is concerned, reasonably satisfactory (one might take issue for example with the interpretation of the Scandinavian element in the life of the city)—but too often the historian strains for concrete proof of theories which could often be found by excavation, turning instead to doubtful parallels in other towns and other countries. The waterfront, for example, is mentioned only in shadowy terms by Christopher Brooke and Gillian Keir, but archaeological work between Billingsgate and St Magnus' church, and at Trig Lane, has revealed substantial wharfage of the Roman, Anglo-Saxon and post-Conquest periods and so brings the waterfront into the light. New questions can now be asked, new answers given to old problems. As a result of excavations the position of St Magnus in relation to the foundations of the medieval bridge and to the line of the wharfage must be examined more closely. The specialist should now examine the possibility that the "*bryggjur*" pulled down by Olaf and Æthelred were wharves and not a bridge, for the Old Norse word certainly has that meaning.

It has taken historians many years to incorporate archaeological results in their writings. Brooke and Keir do so naturally, but there is still a strange reluctance among many to admit it as more than a colourful appendage to lighten the normal burden of the historian's narrative.

MEDIEVAL HISTORIANS now nave to recognise that archaeology is the one area which is going to provide a substantial body of new evidence concerning man's activity in the past. This is particularly so in respect of towns. War damage, accidental destruction and (in the 'fifties and 'sixties) massive and continuous development in the historic centres of towns throughout Europe have provided opportunities for archaeological investigation. These opportunities, however, have only been taken up in a few cases. The exceptions in this country have been honourable ones (London, Winchester, King's Lynn, Stamford and Southampton have received much archaeological attention) but until recently many towns have had an almost scandalous history of neglect: Worcester, Manchester, Stirling and Canterbury, to name but a few. At Cambridge, for example (the seat of the oldest chair and department of archaeology in the country and for many years the home of one of the regional offices of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments), only half an acre out of some 30 acres of redevelopment was examined between 1956 and 1969. This story of the threat to our towns was told in *The Erosion of History*, published by the Council for British Archaeology in 1972. The situation is still serious but the first steps to remedy it have been taken, and taken in time.

Southampton is one of the first English towns to publish a substantial report of some of its medieval excavations.[4] The ground for this report was prepared two years ago in Colin Platt's general survey, *Medieval Southampton*,[5] which provided a topographical and social study of the town, showing its physical development, drawing parallels with other medieval cities and using the documents in some detail. The new book on the excavations consequently needs little synthetic introduction. It comprises a technical discussion and description of work within the walled town, an area which was badly damaged during the war. Excavation was carried out haphazardly until the middle 'sixties and a large number of excavators have combined to publish this report: their different techniques and results have been drawn together by the editors. It reads jerkily and often uncritically, but this reflects the nature of medieval field archaeology in the pre-*Rescue* period. There is much that is unsatisfactory in this book, but at least the sites and the material have been made available and the book can be used as a quarry by the specialist. I have already spotted an illustration of a runic inscription (one of the first to be found on wood in this country), unrecognised but faithfully recorded by the excavators.

Some blind spots, however, are difficult to forgive. The archaeologist on an excavation is basically using a two-dimensional product to reconstruct a three-dimensional past. The groundplan becomes the building; a trench, a wall. No student of standing buildings, however, has need to do this. Substantial portions of his research material survive, and he can produce and publish plans and elevations, even photographs. Yet in the Southampton report the architectural historian has reversed this process. He has provided us with the plans, but only the plans, of 34 carefully described standing medieval buildings. The only venture into the third dimension is a single reconstructed Romanesque window. This is a nonsense and cannot be lightly forgiven, but it is perhaps symptomatic of many people's approach to archaeology. Digging is fun, and it is recognised that the products of the dig must

[4] *Excavations in Medieval Southampton 1953–1969*. By COLIN PLATT and RICHARD COLEMAN-TAYLOR. 2 vols. Leicester University Press, £30.

[5] Colin Platt, *Medieval Southampton*, Routledge & Kegan Paul (1973).

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be recorded, but the slog of working with scholars in other disciplines, of trying to understand their methods and limitations, is too rarely undertaken by the digging archaeologist. So the architectural historian's problems in the analysis of the different members of a wooden roof, or the philologist's struggle with an apparently intractable text, are too little recognised by the archaeologist and the discipline consequently suffers. Nobody is a polymath nowadays, but, like the natural scientists, the worker in the humanities must come to terms with the idea of teamwork. The production of the Southampton report was undoubtedly riddled with problems, and the editors may have decided to cut their losses and take what the various authors offered. In respect of the standing buildings, however, they might have considered Vanessa Parker's work in association with the King's Lynn Archaeological Research Committee, for her study of standing buildings in that town has prepared the way to much of the interpretation of the archaeological evidence which will appear in the final report on the excavations.

IN A SOCIETY which is largely urban we naturally become conscious of our urban archaeology. There is need for it. The *Rescue* volume reminds us that Southampton is but one of 900 historic towns in England, Wales and Scotland of which more than half (583) "are threatened by some sort of development." But think of it in European terms! Ports similar to Southampton need investigation along the coastlines of Europe, from North Cape to the straits of Gibraltar. The great towns of the Rhine and Danube, of the north European plain, of the Russian rivers and the Mediterranean coast, are all potential archaeological sites which can do more to help our understanding of European culture than have all the contributors to the Pirenne controversy about the growth of towns in the Middle Ages. Destruction of towns by bombing and by property developers, and the consequent clearing of the ground, gave archaeologists opportunities which will never be repeated.

In some places these opportunities have been seized with both hands. The excavations at Novgorod, Budapest, Stettin, Brandenburg, Prague, Cologne, Lund, Antwerp, Trondheim, Ribe and Dublin, reveal breathtaking riches. Slav writing on 400 birch bark rolls at Novgorod, for example, brings an urgency rarely given to the Russian historian:

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contexts in Budapest. The artists' trial-pieces from Dublin, the ships from Stettin, a wharf at Bergen, the Carolingian palace at Paderborn, Ivan IV's palace outside Moscow, a wooden church at Antwerp, or a stone cathedral at Winchester—these are the rich publicity material of archaeology, the stuff which shares the television screens along with the casually found treasure. But these are only the cream of excavations on urban sites throughout Europe. Too often in remembering Winchester we forget Felixstowe; Bergen overshadows Borgund, and Aarhus, Viborg. But the glamorous sites bring publicity, encourage public interest in the whole subject, and must be paraded at intervals.

RUPERT BRUCE-MITFORD has put on such a parade in a curiously balanced book which ranges from the Palaeolithic to the Hanseatic League.[6] The book describes ten excavations and outlines recent archaeological work in Russia. Here again towns are seen to be an important element of archaeological activity. Of the ten sites chosen, two are medieval towns (although one—Mikulčice in Czechoslovakia—is not really acknowledged as such) and another, Helgö in Sweden, is sometimes considered as a proto-town. Strangely, the editor has deliberately excluded Roman and Greek towns from the book (so far have we moved from a classical education), but the pre-Roman Celtic *oppidum* of Entremont perhaps balances this. Twenty years ago, however, when Bruce-Mitford published a similar book on British excavations, out of twelve sites only one town, London, was discussed. This is a measure of the change in archaeological interest.

Bergen in Norway is the major town chosen by Bruce-Mitford. A disastrous fire in 1955 burnt part of the medieval quay and opened the way to an excavation which lasted 14 years and revealed part of the harbour of one of the richest medieval markets of northern Europe. This centre of the fish and timber trade became almost German under the Hansa; indeed German influence survived until the mid-18th century, more than a century after the dissolution of the League. The Bergen excavations produced traces of commercial activity related to, but different from, that found at Southampton. Coincidentally here, as at Novgorod, there is a rich body of written material, carved in runic characters on wood, which reveals much about merchant practice from the 13th century onward. Here are notes of debts, tags for labelling goods, confidential business documents; but also erotic poems,

[6] *Recent Archaeological Excavations in Europe.* Edited by RUPERT BRUCE-MITFORD. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £12, $37.50.

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prayers and love letters which cast entirely new light on the vernacular literature of medieval Scandinavia. Such finds are unusual, but provide a bonus to the historian.

In many ways Bergen is a familiar concept to archaeologists; even the Swedish trading station of Helgö in Lake Mälar, not far from Stockholm, with its workshops and house terraces, can be readily understood. But Mikulčice, which spans a period which includes the late Migration Period and the conversion of the Great Moravian Empire in the late 9th century, is a site which is difficult to label. As the richest of the great Moravian sites (although Staré Mesto runs it a close second), its excavator Josef Poulík is certainly justified in labelling it "capital of the lords of Great Moravia." There are a number of churches here, some with rich graves; and it has also produced tools and wooden objects. But it is interesting in that the archaeological material, particularly the jewellery, demonstrates the meeting of Eastern and Western Christendom—the Byzantine and the Carolingian. It is also a fortified site, one of the *ineffabilis munitio Rastizi* of the *Fulda Annals*, one of the earliest post-Roman fortifications in Europe and a forerunner of the fortresses of Henry the Fowler, and even of Alfred the Great. A strange place, and one which reveals more of the strength of the Moravian Empire than any casual annalistic references, setting the great mission of Cyril and Methodius against a background of power politics north of the Danube.

Fortresses are treated elsewhere in Bruce-Mitford's book. Olaf Olsen, the leading Danish medieval archaeologist and a man of great insight and energy, writes on the extraordinary series of circular fortresses laid out by central authority throughout Denmark in the late 10th century. He sees them as "barracks" for a detachment of soldiers under stern military discipline, perhaps in preparation for Sven's invasion of England. Other theories have been put forward, that they were garrison forts, that they were royal centres of administration, or that they were places of refuge for the population of the surrounding countryside, as were the forts of the Alfredian burghal hidage. Such theories cannot be tested against historical documents; only archaeology can ultimately give answers to the questions raised by the discovery of the Danish fortresses and other like problems.

The English site chosen by Bruce-Mitford for inclusion in his book is, interestingly, not a town. Mucking, in Essex, at present being quarried by gravel workings, is an Anglo-Saxon village superimposed upon a palimpsest of prehistoric and Romano-British features which have produced rich finds. It is the Anglo-Saxon village,

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however, which catches the imagination and it seems that no conference, no book, no journal, is complete without a contribution on this site which has now been under excavation for nearly ten years. The houses and cemeteries of the Anglo-Saxon phase promise to provide one of the first completely excavated settlement sites of the period. The grubby village of Mucking reminds us that despite the archaeological obsession with towns, Europe during the Middle Ages was largely rural; agriculture and pastoralism formed the basis of the economy, and the efficient administration and industrialisation of the towns could only be supported on this broad foundation. The investigation of the countryside is more time-consuming, more expensive and less certain of rich results than is the investigation of towns; but it is no less rewarding.

GAPS IN OUR KNOWLEDGE of the early medieval countryside are emphasised in one of the volumes of the highly successful new offset series, "British Archaeological Reports." *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape* contains summaries of papers given at a symposium at Oxford in 1973.[7] It is written with great enthusiasm, the authors stumbling over each other to get their ideas—many of them urgently sensible—into print. The basic problem is one of scale. Thousands of sites of all periods are known to exist, and it is only possible to investigate a couple of hundred. As dry summer has succeeded dry summer, aerial photographs have produced more and clearer pictures of bigger and better rural sites. We can never tackle them all. One of the more dramatic—and completely unprovable—statements of the early *Rescue* fervour was that it was impossible to walk more than 400 yards in any direction without treading on an archaeological site. Numbers are a problem; another is the size of each individual rural site. It is hard enough to investigate a tenement site in a city, but the examination of the whole of a deserted medieval village is another dimension of the problem.[8] John Hurst, for example, working on little money and with short summer seasons, rarely more than six weeks at a time, has in 25 years produced a thorough study of a small part of the lost village of Wharram Percy in Yorkshire, but there are at least another 25 years of excavation left. At this rate, I am sure that Keith Wade, one of the contributors to *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape*, is correct in urging that many more sites must be sampled and that the total excavation of sites must be limited.

Let no one think that the threat to the countryside is less great than that to the towns. Here the developer is not the real menace; rather it is the farmer with new agricultural methods who threatens sites. Deep-ploughing, ploughing land which has not seen a plough for a thousand years or more and, perhaps worst of all, afforestation are the big problems. Even recreational use of the countryside can cause serious erosion as walkers, climbers and motor-cyclists destroy delicate turf.

What must archaeologists look for in the country? First of all for the landscape itself: they must discover when it was first cultivated, what the boundaries of settlement are, how the land was utilised, and they must try to decide how local ecology imposes different patterns on contemporary sites in different parts of the country. The archaeologist is now beginning to be as critical of the *ex cathedra* statements of natural scientists as he is of laws laid down by historians. A palaeobotanist may make the statement that the bluebell is an indicator of primary woodland, but field examination may well show (as in one recent case) that many different species of bluebell in a wood can indicate exactly the opposite. The natural scientist has to provide the

[7] *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape*. Report No. VI. Edited by TREVOR ROWLEY. British Archaeological Reports (122 Banbury Road, Oxford), £2.

[8] E.g. *The Medieval Clay-lands Village: Excavations at Goltho and Barton Blount*. By GUY BERESFORD. Society for Medieval Archaeology, £4.50.

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outline indications of land utilisation, the presence of wild and domestic fauna, the type of grain grown, the methods of butchery and the efficiency of the seedsman. The archaeologist can provide details of houses, of the pattern of settlement, of technology, as well as the raw material for the natural scientist. The final report should marry all this material together with such historical background as exists.

BECAUSE OF THESE PROBLEMS of the countryside, of landscape, and of agriculture, I would, if I had to choose the most important European post-Roman excavation since the war, plump for the Danish site of Store Valby.[9] I would choose it because it demonstrates an ideal combination of historical, natural historical and archaeological method. What is more, the site was not completely excavated and the study was carried out without too great an expense, save in the work of the scientific investigators.

Store Valby was a village which was enclosed and razed in 1774. A settlement had existed there from the Viking Age, and in some cases the house-plots had been in constant use for 800 years. By a careful examination of taxation records, parish registers, land registers and other documents, the Renaissance and later history of the village was reconstructed, the houses identified, their furnishing analysed and the family relationships of the individual owners of the houses and farms determined. The changing social importance and wealth of certain farms was revealed, and their basic economy evaluated. It was thus possible to project back into the early Middle Ages some of the results of these later documented investigations and, in their light, interpret undocumented features. We can set in the excavated rooms the furniture described in the inventories and show how the wear of the floor indicates the position of the table; the colour of the bed coverings appears from an inventory, the position of the bed from the marks on the ground.

Store Valby, was, however, a research excavation, chosen for its scholarly potential after careful research. Rescue now overshadows so much archaeological planning that it is almost unfashionable to think in ivory tower terms, and some of the wilder rescue diggers have demanded that the academics come down from the hill forts and get their boots muddy on rescue excavations. It is interesting that most of the excavations in Bruce-Mitford's book are not the result of the

[9] *Store Valby, historisk-arkæologisk undersøgelse af en nedlagt landsby på Sjælland* (with English summary). By AXEL STEENSBERG and J. L. ØSTERGAARD-CHRISTENSEN. The Royal Danish Academy, DKr. 345.

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demands of the quarry manager or the developer. Perhaps this should be remembered. Roman remains at Dover may be important, but how about the excavations of the Somerset Levels, Wharram Percy, Star Carr, Sutton Hoo, the West Kennet long barrow? None of these were rescue excavations, and the first chairman of *Rescue* has excavated as much on unthreatened sites as on threatened ones. There are indeed two major research projects in post-Roman archaeology; the Royal Archaeological Institute's Castle Project seems almost moribund, but the project on church archaeology inspired from the Continent is beginning to produce some results through excavation.

Excavation is not the whole of archaeology. It is the servant of the archaeologist, not his master. The rescue archaeologist must remember this and occasionally lift his eyes from exciting finds to the general advancement of his subject, from the post-holes to the structure they once supported.

Demography & Demagogy

On the History of Rural People—By JOHN BOSSY

"MOST HISTORIANS", says Frank E. Huggett, "are members of the urban middle class." So they are, but does it matter? It matters to him, because he thinks it has led them to undervalue the importance of rural communities, to treat them as an "unchanging background against which the drama of . . . history [is] played out." This is hardly the case if you judge by the present crop of books, which are concerned almost entirely with rural people and their problems from (practically) China to Peru during the centuries since the Renaissance.

Whether or not Huggett is a member of the urban middle class—he certainly writes as if he had mud on his boots—he has written a brisk, solidly well-read and sensible account of the European rural scene since the 16th century.[1] His frame of mind is Tawneyesque with a dash of contemporary conservationism, but he gives his due to Tawney's pursuer, Eric Kerridge, is fair to landlords, good on the cultural aspects of peasant life, and informative about parts of Europe we do not usually hear about: Denmark, for example, which turns out to be a remarkably successful example of 18th-century "enlightened" reform. He leaves us with the information, duly illustrated, that left to itself wheat will go back to grass in four seasons, which should leave members of the urban middle class hoping that the art of cultivation will not be forgotten. The only thing wrong with his book is its title, which joins a 19th-century cliché to a 20th-century one; it should make a good start for courses in Peasant Studies.

As Huggett to (say) Slicher van Bath and his crop-yields, so Leslie Clarkson to (say) the Cambridge Group for the Study of Population and its art of family reconstitution, which has always reminded me of dried egg. *Death, Disease and Famine*[2] is demography with a human face, as you realise in Clarkson's preface when you meet his wife, "whose experience of demography is more practical than mine"; or demography in a truer sense, as in his account of childbirth in early modern England, which

> frequently occurred in dirty, overcrowded conditions, attended by untutored midwives whose obstetric skills had been refined by groping and fumbling, and assisted by assorted neighbours who busied themselves by casting horoscopes, muttering incantations, shutting doors, blocking windows, and spreading infection.

His subject is the incidence of death, the things that caused it, the human reaction to it as revealed in funerals, and the transformation of the English régime of mortality in the middle of the 18th century. His list of death-dealing agents is a long one: hunger, disease, the medical profession and violence, which includes warfare, murder, capital punishment (conceivably, he hazards a guess, the cause of 1% of all deaths in England in 1600), and infanticide. The only thing which seems missing is old age, which some people must have died of.

APART FROM THE general humanity of the book and its genial attitude to quantification, *Death, Disease and Famine* sticks in the mind for its resistance to total explanations. Events of extreme importance in the subject are allowed to be mysteries, like the cessation of plague in England after 1665. Shrewsbury's *History of Bubonic Plague in England* is quietly disposed of.

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[1] *The Land Question and European Society*. By FRANK E. HUGGETT. Thames and Hudson, £1.50.

[2] *Death, Disease and Famine in Pre-industrial England*. By LESLIE CLARKSON. Gill and Macmillan, £8.75.

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Malthus's theorem of human fertility outrunning the means of subsistence does not work. The two great exterior checks on the size of the population—an insecure food supply and the ravages of disease—operate, except in restricted cases, independently of each other. Plague, influenza and smallpox come and go of their own accord, "determined by mysterious epidemiological causes that had nothing to do with economic or social conditions." Dysentery, diarrhoea and syphilis flourish irrespective of the price of grain. The social obligation felt by people to give a decent burial to their dead defies both poverty and plague. Murder, then as now, is a "part of family life", not a gesture of social protest. The industrial revolution, which he regards as a mercy to all concerned, arrives upon a pullulating scene whose character cannot be briefly described, let alone explained.

I imagine there are many people who will regard this detotalising effect as a betrayal, a counsel of despair, a symptom of inveterate English empiricism, or simply reactionary. Sartre says that all pluralisms are right-wing. Maybe: all left-wings are certainly monist. Try this:

> The modern bourgeoisie . . . arose and throve on its ability to transform labour-power into a commodity and thereby revolutionise every feature of thought and feeling in accordance with the fundamental change in social relations.

Or this:

> Both Portuguese economic expansion and Portuguese missionary activities overseas were but different aspects of the same imperial drive which was and remains one of the hallmarks of western capitalism.

The authors, Eugene D. Genovese, in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*,[3] and Edward A. Alpers, in *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa*,[4] each purport to be giving a potted history of Europe during the centuries covered by Clarkson. Admittedly, Europe is not their immediate concern, but there is an awful disparity between what they need the history of early modern Europe to be and what a decent European historian, and particularly a decent European economic historian, will tell them that it was.

Alpers and Genovese are both concerned with the relation between whites and blacks created in the age of European discovery and expansion, Alpers at one end, in Africa, Genovese

[3] *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made.* By Eugene D. Genovese. Pantheon Books, $17.50; André Deutsch, £7.50.

[4] *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa.* By Edward A. Alpers, Heinemann, £2.80.

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Dr Yates gives a detailed historical elucidation of the meaning of the Valois Tapestries, now in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. She describes how the tapestries arose out of Catherine de' Medici's marvellous series of festivals at the court of the Valois in the sixteenth century which were intended to bring together hostile religious factions in a 'politique' conciliation. The record of a 'lost moment in history' described by Hugh Trevor-Roper as 'a marvellous book'.

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ROUTLEDGE

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at the other, in the United States. Both are totalists, and Marxists. Both have difficulty in fitting fissiparous facts within their totalism. But that is where the resemblance stops. In Alpers's *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa*, the gap is simply between the thesis, as stated, and the facts, as stated, which do not seem to me to bear any relation to each other. The thesis is that the "underdevelopment", or impoverishment, of East Africa, and by implication of Africa as a whole, is a consequence not of European colonial rule as such, but of the impingement of international trade on the region during the centuries between the Portuguese passage round the Cape and the territorial division of Africa. The region dealt with is roughly Mozambique, with some reference to Tanzania, where Alpers has lectured. Despite the quotation given above, the "capitalism" in question is not purely western, but also Arab and, to a surprising degree, Indian.

What Portuguese, Arab, Muslim African and Indian merchants were looking for in the area was, for a short time, gold, then ivory, and finally slaves; the slave trade here became important during the later 18th century, and very important when the British began to suppress the West African trade after 1807. What they offered in exchange was cloth, beads and some firearms. The ivory went to India, later to Europe; the slaves to the Middle East, to the French Indian Ocean islands, and finally to Brazil. Alpers argues that the trade was inherently exploitative, since what Africans were getting was usually much less valuable than what they were giving. Since the African peoples who did the trading, like the Yao, were under no pressure and were, he says, "receiving otherwise unobtainable goods of both great practical and prestige value in exchange for raw materials which were of little value in their own societies", the argument seems dubious.

Except perhaps for a short period during the early 19th century, when it would seem that the size of the slave trade had a serious effect on the demography of some coastal peoples, I cannot see any evidence here that the traffic made the Africans who remained any poorer than they would otherwise have been; in their own judgment it clearly made them wealthier. They had no use for elephant's tusks, and slaves were by and large the product of their own systems of criminal law or of warfare between them. It is certainly conceivable that the opening of an external market in slaves tended to encourage Africans to go to war with one another more often or to intensify the use of slavery as a punishment; but evidence that the trade "contributed . . . to an increasingly divisive differentiation within and between the peoples of East Central Africa" is scarcely offered, or comes in the form of shaky hypotheses.

I do not know how Alpers reconciles his assertion that Portuguese trading and missionary activities were different aspects of the same capitalist drive with his account of the disruptive interference of the Inquisition at Goa with an East African trade which needed the services of Muslims and Hindus. And who will take the Portuguese for the vanguard of European capitalism? Alpers is entitled to his views about what African countries should and should not do in the present, but if he is going to persuade us to take them as history he will have to transpose them a good deal more carefully than he has done here.

EUGENE GENOVESE, too, in what is much the most ambitious and the longest of these books, is grappling with the contrast of what theoretically ought to be and what actually is. But he is a good deal more honest and slightly more subtle about it. The language is more self-consciously Marxist (or Hegelian, or Gramscian), the drama more tangled:

> Cruel, unjust, exploitative, oppressive, slavery bound two peoples together in bitter antagonism while creating an organic relationship so complex and ambivalent that neither could express the simplest human feelings without reference to the other. Slavery rested on the principle of property in man—of one man's appropriation of another's person as well as of the fruits of his labour. By definition and in essence it was a system of class rule. . . .

In practice it was commonly a paternalistic system, genuinely governed by an idea of landlord responsibility and reciprocal obligation inherited from the European past, respectful in certain ways of the humanity and personality of slaves, and providing them with a way of life which was not necessarily unattractive. This does not do anything to endear it to Genovese, rather the reverse: "wherever paternalism exists, it undermines solidarity among the oppressed by linking them as individuals to their oppressors."

Yet his respect for evidence suggests a less dogmatic appreciation, a conflict of theory and practice in himself. One of the reasons why *Roll, Jordan, Roll* is so long is that he is determined to see every confusion of feeling which arose between master and slave as a "contradiction" in the historical process. Sometimes the description seems fair enough: when he shows the law in the South as tying itself in knots trying to deal with the legal rights and responsibilities of persons who were not supposed to be persons, one accepts the term "contradiction" as meaningful, while doubting whether it can be "socially"

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interpreted as a conflict between the individual and the collective interests of a class, or between a supposedly bourgeois law and a seigneurial social system. One accepts it, too, when movingly expressed in the owners' attitude to slave marriage: unrecognised by the law, encouraged on the plantations as a Christian ritual, in which the slave partners are nevertheless not entitled to say "till death do us part." But when it is relentlessly applied to every case where the economic or legal chattelhood of the slave is confronted with the social fact that he is treated and acts as a person, the word begins to irritate. You begin to feel that Genovese is inventing difficulties for himself, that the confusion is somewhere in his mind rather than in the condition of master or slave.

The difficulty may lie in the totalising view of history itself, with its inability to tolerate plurality of interpretation. It may lie in the unfortunate history of the word "social", reduced by a phase of historiographical imperialism to the status of a slave-appendage of "economic." It may lie in failing to give the "economic" its due as "what is related to household management." I can see no real reason why Genovese's fundamental contradiction should not be inverted, why we could not equally well say that what was real in the slave's social situation was, as it was commonly expressed by slaves as well as by masters, his membership of a "family"; while what is artificial is to ascribe to him membership of a class he only belongs to in virtue of a common status before the law which is evidently in some sense a legal fiction. I cannot see why Genovese should privilege one half of his scrupulously presented evidence at the expense of the other half, except by reference to an interpretation of early modern European history which I do not think any serious historian in the field, east or west, would nowadays find acceptable.

"Contradictions", if they are worth talking about, should surely play some part in the dénouement of the historical situation of which they are posited, and I cannot see that Genovese's had any part in bringing about the abolition of slavery in the South: they remain purely descriptive, or decorative. My advice to the reader is to forget about his contradictions, ignore his *obiter dicta* (and his typography), and gratefully accept his luxuriant wealth of information about slave religion, work, domestic life, rituals and amusements as a tribute to the power of human nature to make something out of a frustrating and in many respects vicious condition. If one wants to see how a situation of this kind can be expounded with sympathy towards the underling and no complaisance towards the seigneur, but at the same time with a submission to historical

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reality which one instinctively trusts, one should read Arnold J. Bauer's *Chilean Rural Society*.[5] It is a rare historian who can use the word "capitalism" without making you wince. In Bauer's case I should have been glad to know his views about what is going on nowadays in the country of his affections. But demagogues rush in where demographers fear to tread.

[5] *Chilean Rural Society from the Spanish Conquest to 1930.* By ARNOLD J. BAUER. Cambridge Latin American Studies, 21. Cambridge University Press, £7.90.

Two Hundred Years

Anglo-American Relations—By H. C. ALLEN

WITH THE APPROACH of the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of American Independence, there has, predictably, been an increasing flow of books from the presses about the American Revolution and related subjects. As the Bicentennial year goes on it will no doubt become a spate, especially of course from the United States.

Our American cousins, as the phrase used to run, are naturally launching large-scale celebrations of the event, and we in Britain are on the whole happy to go along with the idea, for there has always been, from the time of the Revolution itself, a vocal pro-American school of thought in this country; and since the work of such Whig historians as George Otto Trevelyan in the 19th century there has tended to emerge what almost amounts to a national consensus that the victory of the United States in the War of Independence was a Good Thing for Britain. It did us no end of good because it taught us the lesson that it is, as we now put it, almost entirely counter-productive to try to hold on to colonies unwilling to be held.

Still, actually to concentrate on raising our glasses in 1976 to that particular event of 1776 seems to some Britons to be pushing it a bit. For this reason there has been an inclination here to celebrate not the Revolution itself but rather the ultimate repairing of the great breach between Britain and America, especially at the end of the 19th century, in what Lionel Gelber, the historian of that period, called in 1938—it is the title of his book—"The Rise of Anglo-American Friendship."

This study has a long and respectable historiography in both Britain and America, though on balance we in Britain have tended to write much more about the history of Anglo-American relations after independence while, oddly in one way, the American historians for years had a near-monopoly of what they call the Colonial Period of American history. Oddly, because it is the only period in the history of the United States itself in which the sources in Britain are plentiful and of the greatest importance.

The natural American dominance of this one early part of British Imperial history has, however, weakened of late. We have recently had from British pens, for example, works on the Colonial Period as diverse as D. B. Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America 1481–1620*,[1] P. S. Haffenden, *New England in the English Nation 1689–1713*,[2] Roger Thompson, *Women in Stuart England and America*,[3] and Esmond Wright (Editor), *A Tug of Loyalties: Anglo-American Relations 1765–85*,[4] half of the contributions to which are by Britons.

IN THE FIELD of Anglo-American history since the recognition of American independence by the Treaty of Paris of 1783, there have been two interesting recent studies of almost consecutive periods, one by an American, the other by a Briton: Wilbur Devereux Jones, *The American Problem in British Diplomacy, 1841–1861*,[5] and Adrian Cook, *The Alabama Claims: American Politics and Anglo-American Relations, 1865–1872*.[6] These years span the American Civil War, the conflict which arguably

[1] *England and the Discovery of America 1481–1620.* By D. B. QUINN. Alfred A. Knopf, $15.00; Allen & Unwin, £6.50.

[2] *New England in the English Nation 1689–1713.* By P. S. HAFFENDEN. Clarendon Press, £5.75, $18.50.

[3] *Women in Stuart England and America.* By ROGER THOMPSON. Routledge, £4.25, $13.25.

[4] *A Tug of Loyalties: Anglo-American Relations 1765–85.* Edited by ESMOND WRIGHT. Institute of United States Studies Monographs. Humanities Press, $4.50; Athlone Press, £1.50.

[5] *The American Problem in British Diplomacy, 1841–1861.* By WILBUR DEVEREUX JONES. University of Georgia Press, $13.50; Macmillan, £5.95.

[6] *The Alabama Claims: American Politics and Anglo-American Relations, 1865–1872.* By ADRIAN COOK. Cornell University Press, $13.50, £7.40.

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had the greatest impact on the United States of any war in her history, but the special significance of the period in the development of Anglo-American relations is only incidentally related to the "War between the States."

Seen in perspective from Atlantis, the years before, during, and after the war appear to be the critical as well as chronologically central ones in the fundamental transformation of Anglo-American relations over the two centuries. Professor Jones's book covers some half-dozen diplomatic crises between the two governments, three or four of them of major importance. Two of them, mainly concerned with territorial disputes on America's northern border, were settled by very successful compromises, the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842 and the Oregon Treaty of 1846; but Anglo-American rivalry and bad feeling over Central America were for a time exacerbated rather than improved by the worst treaty in the history of Anglo-American relations, the ambiguous Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850.

Thus when the two countries entered the necessarily delicate period of relations during the Civil War a number of long-standing disputes, mostly concerned with territorial and policy disagreements on the North American continent itself, had been settled; but there was still a potent legacy of mistrust, with roots of ill-feeling running right back to the Revolution and to the passionate cultural clashes over the development of American intellectual and political identity in the early 19th century, which had centred on the so-called Battle of the Quarterlies. John Bull's Eurocentricity and arrogance (what Professor Jones calls "the diplomacy of menace") still jarred the nerves and sinews of "Brother Jonathan"—who had not yet been fully displaced as the national symbol of the United States by "Uncle Sam."

THE STRAINS WHICH British neutrality in the Civil War (a reversal of her usual role of principal belligerent with America as an important neutral) would impose on Anglo-American relations were early demonstrated by the final incident covered in *The American Problem in British Diplomacy*—the crisis which began on 8 November 1861 when Captain Wilkes, United States Navy, removed two Southern envoys travelling to Britain from the British mail packet, *Trent*, by force, on the high seas. This, the most urgent and immediately dangerous Anglo-American issue of the war, ended in a few weeks, with a prudent withdrawal by Secretary of State William H. Seward from an almost impossible diplomatic position.

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The other of the two gravest maritime crises of the war, the *Alabama* dispute, which is the subject of Dr Cook's study, may have been less immediately perilous but it went far deeper and was to take a full decade to settle. It began on 29 July 1862 when the war-steamer 290, built by Laird Brothers of Birkenhead, slipped unhindered down the Mersey estuary, and then out to the open sea and to a rendezvous with a British vessel, there to collect its war material and armament. Thenceforth, under the name *Alabama*, it had a two-year career as the most successful Confederate privateer of the war.

Against this apparently quite unneutral act, which was not prevented by the British Government (presided over by Lords Palmerston and Russell), the Federal Government protested strongly at the time, and in the full flush of victory just after the war claimed $125 million from the British Government for damages to Northern shipping. To this Charles Sumner, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in 1869 effectively added the enormous sum of some $4,000 million in "indirect" damages for the prolongation of the whole war. Such a claim was only really possible in the crisis atmosphere of post-war American expansionism, which had already driven the alarmed provinces of British North America to form the confederated Dominion of Canada in 1867. In the immediate post-war years, with abortive, indeed ludicrous, armed Irish Fenian raids from American soil against Canada in 1866, even so sober a statesman as Seward had cried, "I know that Nature designs that this whole continent, not merely these thirty-six states, shall be sooner or later, within the magic circle of the American Union." Payment for these "indirect" damages could, in practice, only have been by the politically as well as morally impossible British cession of Canada to the United States.

As Adrian Cook writes, at an earlier date just after the war when those two "blind old men", Palmerston and Russell, could have struck a diplomatic bargain, they "recklessly and arrogantly refused": now an increasingly unbalanced Sumner had "raised the expectations of American public opinion to such heights of fantasy that it proved tortuously difficult to arrange an equitable agreement." That it did prove possible in the end was due as much to profound underlying developments as to the highly important actions of individuals, and especially of Charles Francis Adams, recently American Minister in London, who as chief arbitrator ruled out the indirect claims on his personal responsibility, and of Gladstone who, as Prime Minister, not only agreed to go to arbitration under the Treaty of Washington but accepted the heavy award of $15,500,000 direct damages against the United Kingdom.

WITH THE RISE of democratic forces in Britain under the leadership of such men as John Bright, who (with his friend Richard Cobden) had always been strongly pro-American; with the passage of the second great Parliamentary Reform Bill in 1867 (by the Tories in fact); and with the significant influence of the English peace movement, which for many years had pressed for a system of international arbitration (based on the practical successes of a number of limited Anglo-American arbitrations in the years since Independence), a quite unprecedented strength of liberal and radical public opinion in favour of the United States began to become apparent in Britain. It was not to be a coincidence that the most pressing of the advocates of Anglo-American friendship two decades later was to be the radical Unionist, Joseph Chamberlain, whereas it was his Tory leader, Lord Salisbury, who was to preside over the last great Anglo-American confrontation of the 19th century (and indeed of later years, except for the Suez Crisis of 1956)—the Venezuela Crisis of 1895–6.

By the time of the Spanish-American war of 1898 the rise of Anglo-American friendship appeared to be a solidly accomplished fact, and as recent books on Anglo-American relations in the pre-Bicentennial period have done, the historical writings of those years mirrored the change (in the manner in which, very properly, historians in each generation write and rewrite the histories which interest it). In 1900 the new dispensation was celebrated in the first book of its kind by an Englishman, Edward Smith, *England and America after Independence*. In 1914 this was reciprocated by a distinguished American historian in a volume published in commemoration of the century of Anglo-American peace since the Treaty of Ghent of 1814, which had ended the War of 1812—W. A. Dunning, *The British Empire and the United States*. Not long after the close of association of the two powers in World War I there came, in 1925, a similar, though much less adequate, British book, R. B. Mowat's, *The Diplomatic Relations of Great Britain and the United States*. Thirty years later, after the high point of Anglo-American cooperation during World War II, appeared my own *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations 1783–1952*.

NOW, TWENTY YEARS ON, we have two excellent works which between them neatly box the compass of Anglo-American history since the American Revolution: Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United*

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States and Great Britain, 1783–1900[7] and H. G. Nicholas, *The United States and Britain.*[8] They present a nice Bicentennial balance in a number of ways.

Campbell is American, Nicholas British. Each little volume is part of a substantial American series with remarkably similar aims and even titles—"America and the World", edited by Robert A. Divine, and "The United States in the World: Foreign Perspectives", edited by Akira Iriye. (At the moment anyway, publication of series of this kind does not seem to have suffered unduly from the financial pressures on publishers on either side of the Atlantic.) Both works have excellent, if necessarily to some extent overlapping, bibliographies. Both writers have long moved, and have published before, in the field of Anglo-American relations.[9]

The Bicentennial box, so to say, comes full circle with the fact that Campbell's study stops in 1900, while three-quarters of that of Nicholas is on the 20th century. Their interests and expertise make this natural and appropriate, the one being primarily a diplomatic historian of the second half of the 19th century and the other a scholar mainly in the area of the recent history of international relations.

AFTER THIS TRANSATLANTIC FLOURISH of pre-bicentenary trumpets we do not seem likely (though the historiography of Anglo-American relations has had its surprises in the past) to need further histories of this subject for a long time to come, a fact of which, as one contracted to write yet another study in the field, I am uncomfortably aware.

In the introduction to my own work in 1954, with all the rash self-confidence of relative youth, I declared that two main themes had dominated the two-centuries-old history of Anglo-American relations: "the increasing cordiality of the relationship and the increasing preponderance of the United States within it." Of the first point I wrote that, "Looking back over the whole course of Anglo-American relations from 1783 to the present day, we can see persistent, even steady, progress from mistrust to cordiality." If, twenty years later, one judges

[7] *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783–1900.* By CHARLES S. CAMPBELL. John Wiley & Sons, $9.25, paper $4.50; £6.40, paper £3.25.

[8] *The United States and Britain.* By H. G. NICHOLAS. University of Chicago Press, $10.00, £6.

[9] Charles S. Campbell, *Anglo-American Understanding, 1898–1903*, Johns Hopkins Press (1957); H. G. Nicholas, *Britain and the U.S.A.*, Johns Hopkins Press (1963).

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that this "ripening of friendship" was depicted in excessively clear and strong colours, it still seems to have a general air of truth about it. In that 200-year process since 1776, the Washington Treaty of 1871 appears to constitute a sort of fulcrum: if there is a precise point of balance in the long Anglo-American trend from hostility to amiability, the Alabama arbitration of 1872 (which took place under the treaty) does seem to have the best claim to be that point.

What is clear, however, is that the external framework of Anglo-American events has drastically altered: the unique and dominant role played by the Anglo-American alliance in the affairs of the world during the years from 1941 to 1945 and to some extent for a decade after that time, is now wholly at an end. This has to do with the second theme discussed in my book, that of power. The capacity of the American and British peoples to understand one another has not notably lessened, indeed it may even have increased since 1955, but the occasions on which it is vitally important to exercise it are far less frequent. But the balance of power in the equation—the replacement of British preponderance in the 18th century by that of America in the 20th—is no longer neat even if it ever was (balances of power seldom are): certainly as between Britain and the United States, with the dismal decline in Britain's relative strength in the world since the war, the preponderance of American over British power is now far greater even than it was 30 years ago.

But it is also true that the power of the United States, economic, political and military, enormous though it still is, has itself lessened relative to that of other nations, the power of many of which, such as Russia, Germany and Japan, has revived and increased in the interim. Nor has American self-confidence and optimism, always the charisma of the United States to other lands, remained unscathed: we no longer get the feeling, so frequently exuded by the Americans in the past, that they now feel there is no problem that they can't lick. This spirit was the essence of the American capacity for world leadership in the two decades after 1945.

Nevertheless, if the first fine careless rapture of American world power is over, the United States is already showing greater economic and political resilience in the world depression of today than probably any other power and assuredly than that of Britain. American history so far (it is an overdone British jibe but still contains an element of truth) has been relatively short, and he would be a rash man who would assert that American greatness is over. The Bicentennial celebrations may not be unimportant in America's reaffirmation of its confidence in its own future and the future of the West and of mankind.

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The Science of Rubbish

Aspects of Archaeology By VINCENT MEGAW

NO DISCIPLINE COMES OF AGE until it has been fictionalised, and it now seems that the archaeologist is well established as a respectable or rather accepted character in modern English literature. Most recent is the woman archaeologist in Margaret Drabble's *Realms of Gold*, for whom "the pursuit of archaeology . . . like the pursuit of history, is . . . a fruitless attempt to prove the possibility of the future through the past." Perhaps even more a product of our troubled archaeological age is the view of "doubts about [archaeology's] bases, premises, methods, and above all its unconscious biases" revealed by Doris Lessing in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*.

Are we indeed returning to a time when "archaeology was acclaimed as the science of rubbish and as fast as the rubbish was dug up it was written down"?[1] Certainly the uninitiated, reading in the latest issue of the *Newsletter of Computer Archaeology* of "computer assisted research on urban patterns of consumption and waste reflected in modern material refuse [household garbage]", may fairly wonder if the time is not over-ripe for publication of a *Bluff Your Way in Archaeology* to join similar titles already offered to the keener students of philosophy, politics and literature.

SOME FOUR YEARS AGO Colin Renfrew reviewed in these pages a group of publications which together demonstrated a new concern for explanation of the changes discernible in prehistory.[2] This approach, based on a careful quantification of the available material evidence, has as its aim the reconstruction of universal cultural patterns following the principles of systems theory and involving the interrelation of the evidence for subsistence, trade and population change. There is indeed a new seriousness, a new searching for far-reaching truths. It is hardly surprising then that Glyn Daniel, in his recent Cambridge inaugural lecture, denied that archaeology need enter a powerful plea for non-relevance in an age when the last thing that universities look like being is universal.[3] In the last few years Renfrew, as the acknowledged English missionary of the new faith has been spreading the gospel in many places, never unheedful of Stuart Piggott's reminder that "an understanding of the history of one's own subject is a great help in thinking clearly about its problems.

There have been several recent surveys of the history of archaeology, including a welcome reissue with additions of Glyn Daniel's *A Hundred Years of Archaeology*.[4] These volumes are typical in their presentation of the contrast between the New World with its advanced body of theory and often poor field techniques and the Old World, home of advanced excavation methods and conservative theory, which an American author has described as "the theoretical-methodological-practical disjunction." This contrast is exemplified by an explanatory periodization of some four centuries of American archaeology[5]—an area more lightly traversed by the late C. W. Ceram[6]—and a descriptive presentation of the same period in Scandinavian archaeology, the home of the first systematic application in prehistoric research of ethnographic parallels.[7]

The same conflict was apparent at the Conference on the Teaching of Archaeology held in Cambridge in September 1974. This unique assemblage of archaeologists, the heads of all the departments of archaeology in the United Kingdom and Ireland, themselves convinced of the general relevance of archaeology could not, with their Continental and American colleagues, agree on the best lines of approach to the study. At the moment, then, there is little hope for the teaching of archaeology, not in our universities but in our schools, where all are agreed relevance

[1] Colin McEvedy, *Penguin Atlas of Ancient History* (1970).
[2] "The Meaning of the New Diggers", ENCOUNTER, October 1971.
[3] "Cambridge and the Backlooking Curiosity." An inaugural lecture by Glyn Daniel, Disney Professor of Archaeology, delivered at the University of Cambridge, 24 October 1975.
[4] *A Hundred and Fifty Years of Archaeology*. By GLYN DANIEL. Duckworth, £4.
[5] *A History of American Archaeology*. By GORDON R. WILLEY and JEREMY A. SABLOFF. Thames and Hudson, £3.50.
[6] *The First American: A Story of North American Archaeology*. By C. W. CERAM. Jonathan Cape, £4.95.
[7] *A History of Scandinavian Archaeology*. By OLE KLINDT-JENSEN. Thames and Hudson, £3.95.

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in education must first be taught. I am not perhaps alone in discovering in many of the attempts to order not only the rubbish of the past but the history of its collection echoes of an evolutionary approach owing as much to the 19th-century American anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan, as to Charles Darwin. Is the conflict between the "old" archaeology and the "new" really a conflict with an old archaeology in new clothes?

IMPECCABLY AUTHORITATIVE comment on these and related problems appears in *Mathematics and Computers in Archaeology*,[8] one of the most important publications on quantitative methods and archaeology to be published so far. Written by a computer scientist trained in archaeology and a European prehistorian skilled in computer science, this is not only an excellent textbook of methods but a model presentation of the how, when, why, and—no less important—why not of the new methodologies. James Doran's comments are not limited to techniques. For example, he writes that a

> factor which has influenced the initial use of mathematics in archaeology for the worse is that much of the impetus has come from related subjects such as geography, anthropology and social sciences generally. Frequently concepts and techniques which have been imperfectly digested by those disciplines are then picked up and used by even more enthusiastic and even less comprehending archaeologists.

Moving on from this pronouncement—which might well be marked by those in disciplines other than archaeology who are enticed into that insidious garden of delights now available to the statistician—Doran discusses the use of general systems theory. Convinced that systems theory can have only general application to the problems of explaining the past, and little to gain from the application of the corresponding mathematical theory, Doran has some firm things to say on the relationship of archaeology to concepts borrowed from the philosophy of science.

The philosophy of science, as he points out,

> is not itself a science, and . . . its practitioners have no more authority for their pronouncements than traditional archaeologists. They collect data, they formulate generalisations, but there is very little concrete testing of hypotheses.

The principle followed by the "progressive" archaeologist, in theory unlike his traditional colleagues, is to construct hypotheses about the past and then, comparing deductions as to what evidence one might expect to find if the hypotheses are correct, match the prediction with the material evidence available. So we first suggest the houses and communities, and the rubbish which may be derived from them, and then compare the actual nature of the archaeological rubbish with the images we have projected. But, as Doran warns us, this method

> fails to recognise that all reasoning, be it scientific, inductive, deductive or whatever, is much more complex even than philosophers of science generally allow. Consequently it imposes arbitrary and damaging restrictions on procedure, and provokes time-wasting arguments by over-simple distinctions between such concepts as description and explanation, induction and deduction. It seems that the less archaeology becomes scientific, in this case the better.

Just as one requires second-generation computers, so too we seem now to require a second generation of archaeological philosophers to correct our over-simple—or over-dogmatic—conceptual framework.

ONE AREA WHERE archaeology has with advantage become explicitly scientific is what, echoing a pioneering and recently reissued study by Grahame Clark,[9] may be termed "economic prehistory." The most recent products of the Cambridge school of economic prehistorians are those associated with the British Academy Major Research Project in the Early History of Agriculture, one of the most vital archaeological units at present working in the United Kingdom and one which it is feared may fall victim to the current financial stringency. The need to place prehistoric agriculture within the context of prehistoric economies in general has resulted in studies of prehistoric garbage heaps as evidence for coastal hunter-gatherer communities from regions as far apart as Denmark and South-east Australia. Such necessary catholicity of approach is set against the background of a carefully thought-out theoretical framework which in the most recently issued group of studies[10] is softened by a disarming quotation from Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Ethnological observations—a field of study hardly less strongly disputed by psychologists than aspects of the "new" archaeology by prehistorians—have in certain areas been contrasted with archaeological evidence, particularly for the occupation and exploitation of certain closely defined territories. This comparison suggests that economic prehistory or, as the

[8] *Mathematics and Computers in Archaeology*. By J. E. DORAN and F. R. HODSON. Edinburgh University Press, £8.00; Harvard University Press, $18.00.

[9] *Prehistoric Europe: The Economic Basis*. By J. G. D. CLARK. Methuen Library reprint, £8.90.

[10] *Palaeoeconomy: being the second volume of Papers in Economic Prehistory by members and associates of the British Academy Major Research Project in the Early History of Agriculture*. Edited by E. S. HIGGS. Cambridge University Press, £8.50, $25.00.

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Cambridge research workers prefer, palaeo-economy may offer a control on the validity of certain ethnographic parallels in archaeological contexts, all the more necessary since after a period in the theoretical wilderness, such parallels are once more in vogue. The demonstration that over-population, evidenced in the Balkans at least as far back as the Neolithic, is apparently inherent in the human condition, together with the observation that in time any viable area will be exploited and adapted to by human settlement, is clearly important for those concerned with modern problems of adaptation to an over-exploited environment.

JOHN EVANS' *The Environment of Early Man in the British Isles*[11] (in which I must declare an editorial interest) considers the development of local ecosystems in a single region in relation to all aspects of environmental studies. This book should both help archaeologists to understand past cultural patterns and jog us all into considering just how irrelevant the seemingly fossilising effects of the fashionable environmental preservation lobbies may in fact be. The changing agricultural landscape of those areas of Britain with the longest history of human occupation is also a theme taken up in Christopher Taylor's *Fields in the English Landscape*,[12] the first of what looks like being a most useful series of studies, entitled "Archaeology in the Field." First-hand studies by the best sort of "journeyman archaeologist" are far more useful than the over-impressionistic, over-extended and archaeologically ill-informed "ecological essay" exemplified in a recent study of the advanced civilisation of the Mediterranean basin.[13]

THE ULTIMATE STARTING POINT of all such studies of prehistoric agriculture is what Vere Gordon Childe long ago termed "the Neolithic revolution" and what Barbara Bender in her wide-ranging, and well-documented introduction to Farming in Prehistory[14] more precisely terms "the transition to food-production." Concentrating on three main areas, South-west Asia (the "classic" home of the domestication of plants and animals), Meso-America, and Peru, Dr Bender is concerned to demonstrate in general what the work of the British Academy Research Project has proved in detail; that the development of domestication was a much more gradual and wide-spread series of events than was once envisaged.

In contrast to Childe's modified view of a general diffusion of culture, this major stage in the development of human society can be shown to have developed as a number of independent responses. Indeed (for those with a *Guinness Book of Records* approach to cultural history), it may possibly be South-east, not South-west, Asia, which, as in the undisputed case of the oldest pottery in the world, has pride of place. The importance in Asia and the Pacific of root-crop cultivation—difficult to detect in the archaeological record—is a topic on which debate continues and where recent work in New Guinea may have much to contribute. In line with the discarding of Childe's original view of drastic climate change and subsequent desiccation as a major factor at the end of the Pleistocene, there is now a general acceptance, for South-east Asia as elsewhere, of more localised climatic and consequential ecological changes playing at least a part in these complex processes of transition.

Some New and Old World cultural aspects of

[11] *The Environment of Early Man in the British Isles*. By JOHN G. EVANS. Paul Elek, £5; University of California Press, d12.95.

[12] *Fields in the English Landscape*. By CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR. J. M. Dent, £5.95.

[13] *Ecology in Ancient Civilizations*. By J. DONALD HUGHES. University of New Mexico Press, $9.50.

[14] *Farming in Pre-history: from Hunter-Gathdrer to Food-Producer*. By BARBARA BENDER. John Baker, £5.50.

CROMWELL AND THE NEW MODEL FOREIGN POLICY

Charles P. Korr

In this inquiry into the foreign policy of England under Oliver Cromwell the author demonstrates that Cromwell, unlike his Stuart predecessors, recognized that foreign policy could be used to bolster the stature of a government. The results of Cromwell's dealings with France were dramatic: a defensive and offensive alliance, war with Spain, the capture of Jamaica, an English army on the Continent, and the possession of Dunkirk by England. Using English and foreign sources, Mr. Korr describes what Cromwell saw as his options in foreign policy and how his choices demonstrate the priorities he had established for the Protectorate. Under Cromwell the concept of "national interest" replaced the dynastic loyalties of the Stuarts as a sanction for the actions of a government of doubtful legitimacy.

320 pages £6.85

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Dr Bender's main case study areas are covered in two surveys[15] which in certain details up-date Grahame Clark's *World Prehistory* but are not in my opinion a better buy (the American volume contains one paper in the tradition of the "new diffusionists", those who explore the possibility of direct contacts between Asia, the Pacific and South America). Better value, and undoubtedly better illustrated, are two regionally more limited studies: James Mellaart's latest survey of the Neolithic of the Near East[16] and Patricia Phillips' study of the West Mediterranean,[17] the last a companion to an earlier volume in the same series on the same period of cultural transition as evidenced in Eastern Europe; curiously this rates no mention in the new survey. In his opening chapter Mellaart emphasises the probable herding of wild goat and gazelle by hunting communities at the end of the Pleistocene while Miss Phillips is content to describe rather than attempt to explain the presence—at a much later date certainly—of various domestic species among strictly non-agricultural communities on the Mediterranean littoral. Both authors are concerned to report the absolute chronology of their areas in terms of the now extensive radiocarbon estimations available, and Mellaart provides some dauntingly detailed but, as I am sure he would be the first to admit, still provisional comparative charts.

IN THE LAST DECADE it has become archaeological general knowledge that for most of the prehistoric time-scale calculated by the radiocarbon method some absolute dates are less absolute than others. Depending on the method of recalibration—by tree-ring counts and/or historical (astronomically derived) calculations—radiocarbon years may be too "young" by upwards of a millennium. It is however far from certain to what degree we may be precise as to the corrections required and it is all the more valuable to have a new summary of largely Scottish opinions on the nature of "the radiocarbon revolution"[18] first propounded and still championed by Colin Renfrew. With this new and cheerfully revisionist rather than iconoclastic series of views generally available, we will be in a better position to judge and calculate for ourselves the possible relative and absolute significance for the chronology of Ancient Europe of both the radiocarbon method and the Egyptian calendar with its time-span extending from around 3100 BC. It is some consolation to the conservators if not the conservatives among us that, like all the best myths, the concept of a cultural relationship between the Bronze Age builders of Stonehenge and the Mycenaean city-dwellers may not after all have fallen victim to mere facts, though by whatever reckoning the period concerned is within the major calibration danger zone of the second millennium BC.

Missing from much of the current debate is the application of thermoluminescent (TL) dating, its raw material being that ubiquitous and indestructable archaeological object, the humble potsherd. As Martin Aitken comments in a new edition of his textbook largely concerned with scientific methods of dating,[19] since the general estimate of the absolute (for once in the precise sense of the word) accuracy of the radiocarbon age of any sample is plus or minus 150 years, TL dating can be expected to give greater accuracy in the case of recent samples, *i.e.* those within our own era, as well as for those beyond the present 7,000-year limits of tree-ring calibration.

HOW THEN ARE WE APPLYING science to the rubbish as well as to the better-than-rubbish of British prehistory? Edited, as one might expect, by the ubiquitous Colin Renfrew,[20] we now have the first new outline to appear since, twenty-five years ago, Stuart Piggott produced a short narrative under the same title. It is perhaps slightly hard that this should find no place in the editor's otherwise characteristically revolutionary and neatly categorised three-phase survey of the changing attitudes to the archaeology of our islands over a period of more than a century. Of more significance perhaps in this weighty, if somewhat too sparsely illustrated, volume is the disparity between the "newness" of the editor's avowed purpose of moving towards a general explanation of culture change and the degree to which conversion to the new chronological, let alone social archaeological, doctrine has affected his fellow-contributors.

Only Barry Cunliffe's post-publication trailer

[15] *The Old World: Early Man to the Development of Agriculture*. By ROBERT STIGLER, RALPH HOLLOWAY, RALPH SOLECKI, DEXTER PERKINS JNR., and PATRICIA DALY. Thames and Hudson, £4.00. *Prehispanic America*. By SHIRLEY GORENSTEIN, RICHARD G. FORBES, PAUL TOLSTOY, EDWARD P. LANNING. Thames and Hudson, £4.00.

[16] *The Neolithic of the Near East*. By JAMES MELLAART. Thames and Hudson, £3.50.

[17] *Early Farmers of West Mediterranean Europe*. By PATRICIA PHILLIPS. Hutchinson University Library, £2.95.

[18] *Radiocarbon: Calibration and Prehistory*. Edited by TREVOR WATKINS. Edinburgh University Press, £3.50.

[19] *Physics and Archaeology*. By M. J. AITKEN. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, second edition, £7.75.

[20] *British Prehistory: A New Outline*. Edited by COLIN RENFREW. Duckworth, £5.95, paper £2.50.

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for his own major production on the Iron Age[21] seems to look to such aims, and thirty pages are perhaps too few adequately to explain them in a period in which I personally doubt that the archaeological material "is both rich and plentiful", or if so, certainly not throughout the region as a whole. Full documentation, on the other hand, is a positive quality of what is, with one exception, a collection of largely descriptive essays concerned with small-scale material remains rather than with monuments. Is it, to borrow his own words, "because we do not in all cases know what we are looking for, in the sense that we have not yet formulated all the questions to which we shall desire an answer" that one doubts that Renfrew has generated the book he originally hoped for?

Major reviews of artefactual archaeology such as Colin Burgess' total survey (in *British Prehistory*) of the Bronze Age are infinitely preferable to two recent examples of monument archaeology intended for a wider audience. A. H. A. Hogg's life-time knowledge of what Burgess and Cunliffe remind us we must now regard as Bronze Age as well as Iron Age hill-forts—2,500 known examples providing the most spectacular and plentiful of all later prehistoric monuments—should certainly have given us as much explanation as description; despite useful notes on chronology and structured history, this is a somehow disappointing guide book[22]. Evan Hadingham may have thought in his insular review of the more enigmatic monuments of the British Neolithic and earlier Bronze Age[23] to put in perspective the attraction of megalithic monuments for the most prolific of archaeological fiction writers—the lunatic fringe. C. W. Ceram, as his last book demonstrates, is a model of how to present as rubbish what really is rubbish. Alas, the megalithomaniacs and pyramidiots (to add to Glyn Daniel's felicitous new terminology), such as the Japanese professor of veterinary medicine who scorned a Mycenaean link with Stonehenge in preference for its undoubted manufacture from the compacted dung of Suffolk Punch horses, are more likely to be encouraged than disproved by Hadingham's largely ill-illustrated collection of facts, half-facts and fictions.

SURVEYING THE RANGE of my University Library's extensive collection of British prehistory, a German colleague recently asked as much in anger as in sorrow, "Why do you English not produce some *serious* studies, less of these introductions-to, reviews-of, and archaeologies-in?" Though it undoubtedly loses weight in translation, the accusation reminds one that continental and particularly German scholars are much concerned with the production of monographs on such-and-such a style of pottery, total publication of small groups of chambered tombs, and detailed typological analyses of local metal industries. To our continental colleagues it is often incomprehensible that we in Britain can prepare so many new outlines let alone old ones without the ready availability, as it seems, of the necessary corpus, the basic vocabularies without which it cannot be possible to compile a literate synthesis of the past. It is not sufficient to counter that an absence of adequate quantification makes much of continental object-collection largely unusable and certainly unverifiable; there can be, in spite of my earlier strictures, too much explanation and too little description.

That all of us know of and often in our learned papers tiresomely refer to this or that indispensable unpublished thesis is no answer to the general unavailability of such basic studies. An unhappy combination of practical economics and

[21] *Iron Age Communities in Britain.* By BARRY CUNLIFFE. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £9.50, $31.75.
[22] *Hill-Forts of Britain.* By A. H. A. HOGG. Hart-Davis MacGibbon, £10.00.
[23] *Circles and Standing Stones.* By EVAN HADINGHAM. Heinemann, £6.50.

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lack of academic concern for adequate dissemination keeps the mass of material locked up in theses and dissertations. When was the last time that a British museum, national or local, published an adequate scholarly catalogue of any single part of its prehistoric collections? Lamartine's *cimetières des arts* is now a truer label for our museums than Flinders Petrie's "charnel houses of murdered evidence." One enterprising self-help organisation has in the last two years alone produced, at a reasonable profit, just short of two dozen catalogues and related monographs produced by off-set lithography from the authors' own typescripts.[24] The wonder is not that it should have been done but that it should not have been done before; here again America—and for that matter the Antipodes—is way ahead of us.

ONE VOLUME which more than matches up to Germanic standards has been produced by so-called non-conventional typesetting, a method more widely used by both commercial and academic presses than we perhaps realise. This apart, Morna MacGregor's regional study of Iron Age art[25]—dealing almost exclusively with metalwork in north Britain—for once more than merits that tired old blurb-writer's bromide, "to be read with both pleasure and profit", and not only read, but looked at. This is after all a book about *art* and the author's sensitive draftsmanship is an essential aspect of the first extensive treatment to be published on any aspect of pre-Roman Celtic art in the British Isles. This in many ways is as old-fashioned a presentation as many of the titles earlier referred to are new-fashioned; few however are so well-fashioned.

That an objective catalogue such as we are provided with here is so rarely informed by an attendant subjective style analysis is perhaps an indication of the scholarly *malaise* with which many archaeologists, particularly those on the continent, regard the study of Iron Age art. The subject is too seemingly debased and provincial for most classical and classically-trained art historians, and too intractable for the application of new or old typological methodology. Dr MacGregor's study has little to offer on the sociology of prehistoric art and perhaps too little on social archaeology—though the role of the craftsman-artist in the Celtic world is a vexed one and it is fair to state that "it would be a bold man who could look at, say, an engraved mirror and identify the tribal attributes of its maker—far less its user." But there is both in commentary and catalogue much to aid further work on a no less difficult matter, the cross- and trans-cultural links between Roman and Celt and the survival or "Rip van Winkle awakening of Celtic art in the Dark Ages."

CONTINUITY AND TRADITION are one theme of a much wider, indeed probably too wide, survey of Celtic Britain in the period immediately following that covered by Dr MacGregor's detailed analysis. Lloyd Laing spans the period which saw the end of the Roman occupation of southern Britain and looks briefly earlier still; he concludes at the dawn of the Middle Ages.[26] Perhaps any attempt to provide a textbook for a period so ill-served with basic studies is doomed to earn the "un-serious" cachet of my German friend. Certainly here all is description—not all accurate—and little enough is explanation backed up by fact. The often insubstantial archaeological garbage of *Celtic Britain* is carried in an intellectual handcart as old as *British Prehistory's* shining transatlantic container is new. Is this due to the nature of the material? I doubt it; suffice it here to draw attention to the choice of second-hand blocks and original scrawls with which Dr Laing attempts to bring life to such sections of his book as that on "Art and Craftsmanship." The period certainly needs a review and many students will doubtless turn to this one. Regretfully the task still largely remains to be done.

ANALYSIS OF THESE RECENT BOOKS seems to confirm that in archaeology as in the real world we live in troubled times; the fictional archaeologists may after all be fact indeed. What I have missed in almost every title is not evidence of dedication to the cause, or devoutness of belief, so much as humanity and humility of approach. As with all religions which are beyond the stage of the first saints and prophets, the varying forms of non-conformity in archaeological theory and practices are over-concerned to modernise the past in their own intellectual image.

The dichotomy between problem and non-problem oriented studies—which is as good a touchstone as any to distinguish those who are for the new/old archaeology from those who are against it—has been with us since scientific reasoning began. No amount of tripartite

[24] *British Archaeological Reports* (122 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7BP).

[25] *Early Celtic Art in North Britain: a study of decorative metalwork from the third century BC to the third century AD.* By MORNA MACGREGOR. Leicester University Press, 2 vols., £16.00.

[26] *The Archaeology of Late Celtic Britain and Ireland c. 400–1200 AD.* By LLOYD LAING. Methuen, £10.00, paper £4.50.

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periodization can do more than underline philosophical and historical precepts first formulated many years ago by R. G. Collingwood. But if we want to dispel a view of archaeology as "a very expensive way of telling us what we know already from history" then I put in one last plea, not for non-relevance so much as non-exclusiveness. It matters not the slightest that we scavenge the past dressed in a motley collection of other disciplines' cast-offs and our own new clothes, provided we learn from each other and try a little less hard to teach; as our American historians of archaeology conclude, right now "dogmatism is what we need least."

AUTHORS

Miroslav Holub is a Czech writer and poet. His translated works include *Although* (Cape, 1971) and *Selected Poems* (Penguin, 1969). His work in this issue was translated by Jarmila and Ian Milner.

Henry Fairlie, the noted British political commentator, has lived for the past few years in the United States. His books include *The Kennedy Promise* (Eyre Methuen, and Doubleday, 1973; paperback Dell, 1974). His most recent articles in ENCOUNTER include "The Lessons of Watergate" (October 1974), "Letter from Washington" (January 1973), and "Years of Intellectual Havoc" (September 1972).

Peregrine Worsthorne is Deputy Editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* and author of *The Socialist Myth* (Cassell, 1971). The copyright in his essay is vested in *The Alternative* (Bloomington, Indiana 47401, USA). His regular Sunday column is distinguished by his penchant for (in Bernard Levin's phrase) "elegant paradox." In a recent piece, trying to explain the British Left's basic deference to Soviet perspectives by making a sharp analogy with the British Right's pro-American loyalties, he went so far as to write (*Sunday Telegraph*, 23 November):

> "My own support of President Nixon, for example, long after the evidence of his criminality was overwhelming, sprang to a large extent from blind pro-American prejudice, an instinctive refusal to believe what I did not want to believe.
>
> "The same applies to my refusal to be shocked by revelations about the iniquities of the C.I.A. So deep-seated, long-standing, and emotionally passionate is my love of the United States that Uncle Sam can get away with murder without causing me much concern. . . .
>
> "As a life-long pro-American I find . . . there is so much about the United States today which I admire, and so much about Britain today which I despise, that in some ways my primary loyalty today is to the United States rather than to Britain. . . ."

A rare instance of self-criticism in contemporary journalism!

George Steiner is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Geneva. His most recent book, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, was published by Oxford University Press in 1975; his articles on Karl Kraus and on Turner appeared in the January and April 1975 issues of ENCOUNTER.

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D. J. Enright has recently published a new volume of poems, *Sad Ires and Others* (Chatto & Windus).

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MEMOIR

An Autobiographical Fragment:

The Strange Case of Whittaker Chambers

By Sidney Hook

IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED that the political downfall of Richard Nixon would lead to efforts to revise the judicial decision against Alger Hiss. It was Nixon's suspicions that Hiss's disavowal of acquaintanceship with Whittaker Chambers was untruthful that led him as a fledgling Congressman to pursue the matter further when his colleagues were prepared to drop it lest the House Committee on Un-American Activities fall on its face.

Regardless of Nixon's political fate, however, the conviction of Hiss never sat well with large and influential sections of liberal opinion. With the rarest of exceptions, the members of Hiss's very large circle of friends, co-workers, former fellow-students and teachers, political allies and neighbours refused to accept the verdict that he was a perjuror; and that he had perjured himself in the interests not merely of a foreign government but of one of the most terroristic régimes in human history whose programme called for the destruction of his own country. In the eyes of those who beheld Hiss as the very model of a New Dealer and Rooseveltian progressive, even to conceive of him as a secret member of the Communist Party, no less actively engaged in espionage as part of its underground apparatus, was to luxuriate in the fantasies of the politically unbalanced.

Almost all the books written on the Chambers-Hiss case have been pro-Hiss, some of them vehemently so. The intensity of the loyalty which Hiss inspired even among seasonal acquaintances is reflected in the reaction of a Columbia University Professor, a neighbour of Hiss in Peacham, Vermont, where both had summer homes. He had repeatedly scoffed at the convergent lines of evidence I cited as pointing to Hiss's guilt. He declared them to be inconsequential and denounced Chambers as a pathological liar. One day I turned to him and asked, "What kind of evidence would convince you that Chambers was telling the truth?" To which he replied: "Even if Hiss himself were to confess his guilt, I wouldn't believe it."

The rare exceptions among those who knew Hiss were another Peacham neighbour, a Professor of Philosophy at Amherst College (Sterling Lamprecht), originally a strong partisan of Hiss but reluctantly shaken into belief of his guilt as the evidence developed; one of Hiss's attorneys, who withdrew from the case convinced that even if Hiss was not guilty of all the charges Chambers levelled against him, he was withholding important relevant truths; and a Sunday editor of the *New York Times* who was finally persuaded that Chambers' dealings in the underground had been with Priscilla Hiss and that Hiss was covering up for his wife out of conjugal loyalty. And possibly Felix Frankfurter! After Judge Frankfurter appeared as a character witness for Hiss at the first trial (which ended in a hung jury eight to four for conviction) I sent a message to him through Felix Cohen, the son of Morris R. Cohen, my former teacher at CCNY and Frankfurter's very close friend (Felix Cohen had been named after him). The message was that I had very good reasons to believe that Chambers was telling the truth in the light of which it would be unwise to go out on a limb for Hiss. Felix Cohen assured me that he had delivered the message. What effect it had, if any, I do not know. But Frankfurter did not appear as a character witness at Hiss's second trial. However, both he and his wife seem to have retained their faith in Donald Hiss (Alger's brother, also named by Chambers) to the last. Frankfurter's failure to appear as a character witness for Hiss at the second trial may have had nothing to do with my message.

WHEN I SENT THAT MESSAGE to Frankfurter my judgment was based not only on a close study of the evidence but on experiences that involved Chambers and his friends more than a decade earlier.

Since knowledge of the details of the Chambers-Hiss case is often inversely proportional to the degree of emotion it generates, it is necessary to provide some relevant background. The record clearly shows that Chambers did not seek to appear as a witness before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. He had told his story at the urging of friends to an American official in the State Department, Adolf A. Berle Jr., at the outset of World War II in 1939. The names on the notes Berle kept corresponded in

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the main with those publicly named by Chambers subsequently. Chambers had expected that after investigation of the information he had relayed about the members of the Communist Party occupying sensitive posts in government, they would be quietly retired. But nothing happened, and after some time Chambers became convinced that nothing would happen—that somebody higher up was protecting those whom he had identified. Before long, word got out both in Washington and New York that Chambers had told his story to the government. It appears that Chambers was questioned on three other occasions by governmental agencies—State, Naval Intelligence, and the F.B.I. Rumours about Hiss began to spread.[1] It became so much an open secret that Hiss himself was questioned by government officials about alleged Communist connections. When Hiss claims that Chambers' identification of him as a member of the Communist Party came as a *complete surprise* to him, he was not telling the truth. He had already denied the story several times, once to John Foster Dulles. Hiss apparently assumed that Chambers had no proof and was confident that if it came to the issue of his word against Chambers' he would be vindicated.

And he was right; for even when some of the material evidence came to light and until the very eve of the trials (as Alistair Cooke reports) "probably to a great majority of newspaper readers, Hiss could still seem like an impeccable man greatly wronged."

What, then, was Chambers to do when, following Elizabeth Bentley's testimony, he was subpoenaed to appear before the House Committee, which was already familiar with the fact that he had told his story, in one form or another, on four different occasions? He would have been held in contempt if he refused to testify, and would have had to perjure himself if he had denied that Alger Hiss was a member of the Communist Party after what he had told A. A. Berle and others. His great mistake was not telling the whole story at once to the House Committee and in permitting his memory of past friendship with Hiss to sway him into withholding the most damning testimony of all about Hiss' "ultimate perfidy", espionage activities for the Kremlin. This also misled Hiss into believing that Chambers had no material evidence of such activities and that he was therefore perfectly safe if it came merely to assertion and counter-assertion. Had not Mrs Roosevelt said in effect that it was sufficient just to look at the two men in order to tell who was speaking the truth? The apparent absence of material evidence probably made Hiss less unwilling to begin his fateful libel suit against Chambers. Hiss filed this suit reluctantly and only after editorial prodding from the *Baltimore Sun*, which had championed his cause, when Chambers, without benefit of official privilege, repeated his identification of Hiss as a member of the Communist Party.

CHAMBERS' INITIAL MISTAKE before the Committee and the Grand Jury was a repetition of a mistake he made in the 1930s soon after he broke with the Communist Party. It was made in the face of the good advice I gave him through Herbert Solow,[2] the emissary he sent me with an urgent request for help from John Dewey. And thereby hangs a hitherto untold tale . . . .

[1] One of the reports of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee on *Interlocking Subversion in Government Departments* cites a memorandum of a government intelligence agency, dated 25 November 1945, which specifically refers to Chambers' statements about Hiss (83rd Cong. 1st Session, 30 July 1953).

[2] Since Herbert Solow was my chief source of information about Chambers both before and after Chambers broke with the Communist Party, a few words about him are appropriate. He completed his undergraduate studies at Columbia College (where he got to know Chambers) and did some graduate work in history and political science. For some years he served as one of the associate editors of *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* before turning to political journalism. He was a very gifted historian, respected and admired by Charles Beard among others. In the fall of 1929 I converted him to socialism, but he soon developed views quite critical of mine. We remained good friends and were close political allies in our opposition to Stalinism and its American branch. The turning point in Solow's political life was a visit to Leon Trotsky at Prinkipo, the place of Trotsky's Turkish exile. Upon his return to the USA Solow's "Left-Opposition" Communist convictions were at fever pitch. He hoped (and on occasion urged) that the European working class would march on Moscow to salvage the promise of the October Revolution!

Because of his investigatory zeal and talent, Solow was a thorn in the side of "transmission belt" organisations established by the Communist Party to attract —to snare would be more accurate—liberals and intellectuals. He "cooperated" with these and other peripheral groups of the Communist movement until his public break with Stalinism in 1933. Solow's temperament was much too choleric for political effectiveness, and he had a tendency to act as the keeper of everyone's conscience. Alvin Johnson (Editor-in-Chief of the *Encyclopedia* and head of the New School for Social Research) used to refer to Solow as his "Mordecai of the ante-room" always pleading for justice or help for someone. Solow played an active role in the San Francisco general strike as well as the strike of the teamsters in Minneapolis under Trotskyist leadership. He also assisted in relocating the first wave of academic refugees from Germany after 1933. In exposing abuses of justice both in the US and USSR, he was indefatigable. In the 1940s he became an editor of *Fortune* magazine after a short stint on *Time*.

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Before relating it, however, a few words are in order about the mistake Chambers made before the House Committee ten years later, which has led Hiss partisans to attack him as a "pathological liar" and "self-confessed perjuror." The odd thing about these assertions is that they say very little about what Chambers lied about, why, and especially *when*. They give the impression that Chambers lied about almost everything that related to Hiss and Communism. And yet one of the remarkable aspects of Chambers' testimony before the Committee and the Court was his phenomenal memory for detail and how much of it stood up to the severest probing. There is a difference between saying that a person lied and that he or she did not tell the whole truth. Deliberate *intent* to deceive must be established before a person can be convicted of lying. Even if a man lies about something, this is not evidence that he has lied about everything. A man who gets drunk once or even on occasions is not a drunkard. None the less the critics of Chambers are relentless in their denunciation of Chambers as "a liar." Why, then, do so many of them suppress the fact that Chambers volunteered to take a lie detector test but Hiss refused to do so? In all the voluminous testimony we have from Chambers both before the Congressional Committee and the Courts, although there are some errors of detail where his memory apparently faltered and some omissions of incidents from his past, there is only one indisputable lie. This is his denial before the Congressional Committee and the Grand Jury (when he first identified Hiss as a member of the Communist Party) that Hiss had engaged in espionage.

And now an astonishing thing is observable. If one asks those who denounce Chambers for committing perjury at what point he was guilty of it, not infrequently they cite this testimony before the Congressional Committee. But if one believes that Chambers was committing perjury when he *denied* that Hiss engaged in espionage, one must also believe that Hiss was in fact an espionage agent. Otherwise, Chambers could not be committing perjury. The will to believe Hiss innocent is so strong among many of his partisans that they seem unaware that if Chambers' *denial* that Hiss engaged in espionage is perjuriously false, then Hiss is in fact guilty.

When this is grasped, the charge usually shifts. In this version, Chambers was telling the truth the *first* time—he was *really lying* when he reversed himself subsequently and asserted that Hiss turned over to him classified State Department material. *That* charge makes him a liar and perjuror. But in support of that charge, Chambers had the most weighty documentary evidence—evidence that stood up in court under searching analysis, that was accepted by a jury as pointing to Hiss's guilt as beyond any reasonable doubt, a verdict that has withstood appeal upon appeal to the highest courts of the land. The falsity of that evidence must first be established before the accusation of perjury against Chambers can be rationally entertained. No one has come near to doing it. Until this is done the accusation of perjury is an unsupported assertion. And indeed it is Chambers' first statement that his accusers return to, oblivious of the irony that if they believe Chambers was guilty of perjury *then*—and he was!—they are passing judgment of guilt on Hiss for a far more serious crime.

THERE IS NO REASON TO DOUBT Chambers' explanation of why he lied at first about Hiss' involvement in espionage. He had no personal feeling of hatred for him. And during the years between 1938 and 1949, according to Chambers' friends, he always spoke kindly about Hiss whom he had moved to tears when he had announced his defection to him, in contrast to Chambers' remarks about Priscilla Hiss who at the time had promptly notified the avenging furies of the Communist underground of Chambers' defection. Chambers testified against Hiss "in remorse and pity"; and even after Hiss unleashed torrents of abuse against him he showed no personal animus. And this despite Chambers' firm conviction, when his friends speculated that Hiss may have broken with the Communist Party during the war years, that Hiss was still in ideological harness acting under Party discipline. But in not telling all the truth about Hiss at once Chambers was jeopardising his future credibility. He did not realise that too much was at stake to yield to pity. The explanation that some have offered for his failure to mention Hiss's espionage activity at the outset, to wit, that it would have involved him as an accomplice in criminal actions, is not plausible. This may have been a consideration in 1939 but by the time he testified before the House Committee in 1948 the statute of limitations had already given him immunity from any prosecution on that score.

I MET Chambers twice in my life. The first time in the spring of 1934 when he was an underground man and probably already on active assignment to Washington. The second after he emerged from his underground existence, looking like a ghost, as an uninvited guest at a reception for John Dewey, Suzanne La Follette, Ben Stolberg and Carlo Tresca. The first three, together with Otto Ruchle, had served as a sub-Commission of Inquiry of the full Commission of Inquiry into

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the Moscow Trials, and their final Report and Findings of the hearings at Coyoacon, Mexico City, was about to be published.

My first meeting with Chambers was arranged by Lionel Trilling. He had telephoned me and asked me to have lunch with both of them. He was particularly interested, he explained, in having me present my criticisms of the theory of "social-fascism" to Chambers. At the time this was the Communist Party line, laid down by Stalin and the Communist International in Moscow, that the Socialists were not the opponents of the Fascists but "their twins", and just as much "an enemy of the working class." Indeed, because of their traditions and the unavowed nature of their role, in the struggle against Fascism they were to be denounced as the chief enemy. This fateful view was one of the means by which Stalin helped Hitler climb to power since it made an honest united front of the German working class impossible. The Communists called for "a united front from below" which was a self-defeating appeal to the rank-and-file of the Socialist Parties to abandon the leadership of their organisations. There could be no genuine united front except beween organisations. I had written and lectured along these lines.

Actually, although I was beyond the pale during this period in the eyes of the Communist Party officialdom as a leading "Social-Fascist", it was not the only time that I had been asked to meet an avowed Communist privately to discuss the theory of social-fascism. Dr Moses Ehrlich, whose clientele consisted largely of members of New York academic and intellectual circles, had been urging me for a long time to meet, after hours in his office at 66 Park Avenue South, a recent convert to Communism. (We were both dental patients of Ehrlich.) The man in question, I learned later, had been a classmate of Chambers and Trilling at Columbia College about a decade earlier. The story of that meeting is not relevant here but it explains why I was not particularly surprised by Trilling's request to discuss the issue with a Communist who piously accepted the Party line but whose vestigial political common sense left him uneasy about it.

Even though I had not previously met Chambers, I had already known about his existence for some years through mutal political friends. I had been slightly acquainted with Ida Dales, an embittered rusty-haired forerunner of the women's liberation movement in Communist circles, with whom Chambers had had an unhappy liaison. (I recall, with a shudder, a remark of hers that had made the rounds when she rejected the sexual advances of her comrades: "I refuse to be used as a Party toilet!") Chambers was quite well

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known in virtue of his contributions to *The Daily Worker* and the Communist literary periodical, *The New Masses*, and had been favourably mentioned by the Moscow mentors of the Party line on literature. I myself had not been particularly impressed by some of the things of his I had read and was surprised to hear him extravagantly praised by Joseph Freeman, at that time the Party's indolent and reluctant watchdog on the literary front, as well as by some of the dimmer Communist wits like Oakley Johnson who still argued with "social-fascists" like me.

WE MET at one of Schildraut's vegetarian restaurants not far from Madison Square. Trilling had picked up Chambers somewhere nearby and they were already seated waiting for me when I arrived. I came directly from my class at Washington Square College. Between mouthfuls of "nuttose" and "protose", I developed my objections to the idiotic theory of social-fascism and traced the baneful consequences that had followed from it—Hitler's ascension to power in January 1933. I pointed out that on 1 May 1933, even after the Communist Party of Germany had been outlawed, and on the very eve of Hitler's smashing of the Social-Democratic trade unions, Stalin's Comintern had declared that the Socialists were *still* "the chief enemy of the German working class." As I spoke, Chambers sat as silent as a little Buddha, except for an occasional grunt and comments like "Maybe!" and "So you say!" I left them still at the table as I rushed off to make an afternoon class. That night Trilling phoned. He seemed to be very distressed. I asked him what Chambers' reaction had been to my argument. I vividly recall his words. "Sidney, I don't understand Whit at all. After you left I turned to him, and asked: 'Well, what do you make of what Hook said? It makes sense to me.' He didn't reply to any of your points. His only answer was, 'Lionel, I don't trust that man—he has a Social Democratic face!' "

BY THIS TIME, Chambers had disappeared from public view into the Communist espionage underground. But he had become by then too well known in the radical periphery, as a literary talent with the promise of much greater achievement, for his disappearance to go unnoticed. From time to time on occasions when literature and politics were being discussed, someone would inquire: "By the way, whatever happened to Whittaker Chambers? . . ." Those were the pre-Popular Front days in which the Communists (as the official party literature of the period attests), had not yet learned caution and guile in masquerading their political objectives. Nor were they very security conscious. Penetration by government agents had not seriously begun. There were persistent rumours that several Communist opposition figures whose political future had been snuffed out by Stalin's interference in the American Communist Party had been recruited by the underground. Despite their programmatic differences, they had joined to prove their revolutionary devotion. Until the Moscow trials a few years later, when the purge in its most murderous form began to decimate the ranks of the underground, this phenomenon had also occurred in Europe. I once asked Alexander Trachtenberg, the head of the Party's International Publishers, "What's Chambers doing these days?" He replied brusquely, "He's doing other kind of work now." At that time, although politically hostile to me, pretending that he regarded me as a Trotskyist—which I never was—Trachtenberg was still friendly when we occasionally chanced into each other, especially when none of his comrades was around. Ever since I had helped put the translation of Lenin's *Materialism* and *Empirio-criticism* into English (the first of Lenin's *Collected Works* to appear in English and for which Trachtenberg received official kudos), he was not above picking my brains for free advice on technical ideological matters although swearing at me in a genial way for "opting out of the class struggle."

Trachtenberg's remarks were sufficient to tell me what work Chambers was doing. If I had any doubts about it they were laid to rest by three friends of Chambers. One was a member of the Furrier's Union and a member of the Communist Lovestone opposition, to whom Chambers remained personally loyal. The other two were former Columbia classmates of Chambers, one of whom, Herbert Solow, was by that time a non-public member of the Trotskyist group, and the other without any political organisational affiliation. Independently of each other, and quite casually, they indicated that they were aware that Chambers was working underground.

It may be hard for the politically knowledgeable reader, in view of subsequent developments and in these security-conscious days, to believe that there could be such laxity on Chambers' part. But secret agents still remain human beings when they go underground, and unless the locale of their activity is radically changed after they are recruited (which is usually the case), they rarely break *all* the personal ties of long standing contracted before their initiation into undercover activity. Even when they keep their own families in the dark, they seem almost always to confide about what they are doing to some close friends. Once the romantic glamour, which is mostly imaginary, wears off, it is a lonely life. It is particularly hard on those who formerly had been

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politically active and were under strict orders to avoid any political entanglements or manifestations of public interest in radical politics. They develop a raging thirst for radical political information and gossip. There is no way of determining how much Chambers let drop about whom he was seeing and who was feeding him information. At best this would be hearsay. But there is no doubt that this secret agent made no secret about what he was engaged in when he met with some of his friends.

ONE OTHER FEATURE of the situation is hard to grasp unless the historical perspective is kept in mind. Why were members of the internal Communist Party political opposition, whatever their factional allegiance, willing to join the underground? (I am not referring to those in the leadership of a political faction who once banned by the Kremlin were too well known to be of any use.) The reason is that although the factional strife was extremely poisonous, the underground existed, not for the sake of the American Communist Party but for the Soviet Union—loyalty to which was put first in those days as the citadel of the true faith, however unworthy its servitors in the Kremlin were deemed to be. Prominent members of the Communist Party as well as leading sympathisers were not loath to express their contempt for the faction-ridden American organisation. But the Soviet Union, and what it stood for, was sacrosanct regardless of the persons at its helm, especially so after Hitler had come to power and the danger of war against the USSR loomed larger. Despite excesses and mistakes of the régime, the Soviet Union had to be "defended at all costs." It was in this spirit that politically active Communists, especially outside the Soviet Union, served. Theirs was an act of total sacrifice, and praised by those who recruited them as one of the highest fidelity. It was an act that proved fatal to many. Judging by the accounts of the few defectors who have survived, they knew precious little about the horror and terror in the country for which they were staking their lives.

CHAMBERS apparently was not a member of any organised party faction. During the period when he was living with Ida Dales, I had heard that he was closest to the William Z. Foster group (to which he would be drawn on sentimental grounds because it was more indigenously American, closer "to the workers" than the Lovestonites). Because of his friendship with Mike Intrator, who was a member of the Lovestone group, and because he dropped out of the Party in 1929 after Stalin's purge, some have opined that he was a member of the latter group. This may have been true for a short time, but he rejoined the Party in 1932. When I met him with Trilling in 1934 he appeared firmly wedded to the theory of social-fascism which the Lovestone group was far too intelligent to accept. Not long after Stalin turned over the reins of the party to Earl Browder, Chambers, like Joe Freeman, had developed an ill-concealed disdain for the leadership of all the American factions and was worshipping only at the altar of the Soviet Union.

There were several other things that I had heard before my meeting with Chambers which led me to assume that he was engaged in secret work for the Soviet Union. A very close friend of mine was working as a volunteer in the offices of "The Friends of the Soviet Union." At the time she was a graduate student at Columbia University. This was before the United States had recognised the USSR. Late in 1932 she encountered one of the minor functionaries of the organisation, who was in an excited and jubilant mood. Unable to contain himself he confided to her, when she inquired about the cause of his exuberance, that he and Whittaker Chambers had pulled off a great coup for the Soviet Union. They had just lifted a formula for an important chemical process from a large industrial plant. When she related the incident to me she scoffed

The collapse of democracy

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at the whole thing. "What kind of spies are these?", she exclaimed. "Imagine telling *me* even if the story was true!" At the same time I was informed by another political friend (actually a former N.Y.U. student who was sitting in on on my classes there, and who was secretly very close to the Trotskyist group although ostensibly cooperating with the Communist Party) that Chambers had succeeded in "breaking up a Japanese espionage ring" operating in New Jersey. I took that report—particularly the lurid details he provided, as if he had been an eye-witness—with a large dose of salt. I cite it because, despite the elements of exaggeration, there was no reason to assume that he had made up the entire story out of whole cloth. He knew Chambers and was a political intimate of Solow, Elliott Cohen (the managing editor of the *Menorah* magazine), and some of Chambers' other friends. There was no reason why, in his case, any more than in the gleeful outburst of the young man about the successful industrial espionage, he should have mentioned Chambers rather than someone else. There were also some rumours whose source I can no longer recall that Chambers had gone to the Soviet Union to receive some decoration for his services.

All this explains why I assumed—and I am confident that I was not the only one—that Chambers was engaged in underground work. His activity must have begun long before he was given his Washington assignment by Colonel Bykov.

DURING THE STORMY NEW YORK DAYS when a small group of us, political independents and Trotskyist sympathisers, were fighting to expose the massive frame-ups of the Moscow Trials nobody gave Whittaker Chambers much thought. When his name came up, it was assumed that he was on the other side. One day in May 1938 Herbert Solow came to me with a startling piece of news. Chambers, he reported, with whom he had been in touch over the years, was "breaking" with the Communist Party. He was now hiding, trying to escape the killers of his own underground espionage apparatus, fearful of his life and that of his wife. According to Solow, Chambers had been critical of the Moscow Trials from the outset (something that had been reported to me by Chambers' other Columbia classmate) but the precipitating cause of his break was a well-grounded apprehension that he would soon be summoned to Moscow and liquidated there as had already been the fate of some of his superiors in the *Apparat*, the branch of the underground in which he was working. Chambers was on the verge of hysteria, convinced that because he had become a faceless, nameless, unknown creature of the underground, his elimination either by murder or kidnapping would remain undetected. His task was to become a *public* character again, to emerge under his own name, in the light of a publicity that would prevent his disappearance into the shadows. The best way he could do that, in his view, was to be received by John Dewey, to whom he was prepared to tell his story, and then under the protective mantle of Dewey's good name and reputation, give the whole story to the press. I was asked to arrange the meeting with Dewey with whom, at the time, I was in touch almost daily. Dewey had been in the headlines throughout most of 1937 as Chairman of the "Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials" which I had a hand in organising. As head of the sub-Commission that held hearings in Mexico City, he had already delivered a preliminary report at a mass meeting at the Mecca Temple in New York City. It was natural, if Chambers' story was true, that he should try to reach Dewey who had by that time learned an awful lot about Communist skulduggery.

My first reaction to Chambers' overture was one of extreme scepticism; and my second was one of suspicion. The reason was political not personal. At the time I feared that another Moscow Trial was in the making. In what appeared as a preliminary attempt to stage such a trial around the Kremlin agents, Robinson-Rubens, then reported under arrest in Moscow as "American spies", hints had been dropped in the Soviet press that Robinson had been active in Mexico in recent years. Together with others on the Trotsky Defence Committee, I suspected a build-up that would enable Soviet secret agents, posing as confessed American spies or members of the Communist opposition, to claim that they had received instructions from Leon Trotsky via John Dewey to assassinate Stalin. Soviet secret agents had played a key role as co-defendants in the earlier Moscow Trials. Herbert Solow himself had broken the story about Robinson-Rubens in the *New York World-Telegram* and had called attention to its fishy aspects. Anyone familiar with the fantastic fabrications of the Moscow Trials would not have regarded my reactions as evidence of political paranoia. The Kremlin would scruple at nothing to discredit Dewey and the Commission of Inquiry whose final report on the Moscow Trials, *Not Guilty!*, was soon to appear.

EVERYTHING I KNEW ABOUT Chambers was compatible with the possibility that he might be involved in a scheme of this sort. At first I refused even to talk to Dewey about

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Chambers unless there was more convincing evidence that Chambers' reported break with the Communist movement was genuine. I asked Solow to bring me more specific information. The next time he came he reported that Chambers was prepared to make startling revelations about Communist underground networks operating in Washington. He added that Chambers was growing frantic with fear lest the underground catch up with him. By this time Solow's faith in the genuineness of Chambers' defection was beginning to influence me. When Solow then told me that Chambers had named names to him I insisted that he name them to me. After a while Solow yielded and gave me the names. They meant nothing to me at the time except for one name—Lawrence Duggan. His father was Professor Stephen Duggan, the very model of an establishment figure in education and the study of foreign affairs, who had been a teacher at CCNY when I was a student there and had lectured in some of my classes. Professor Duggan was a popular and well regarded personage on the campus. He subsequently taught a course in international relations at Columbia University before becoming Director of the Institute for International Education. I was now convinced at least of the substantial truth of Chambers' story. It was not likely that the Kremlin would "blow" a ring so high up in government circles in what at best was a risky long shot to compromise Dewey.

I LAID THE MATTER before Dewey. Normally he would have been glad to receive anyone who needed his help. After his experience in Mexico and detailed perusal of the record of the first two trials he had learned a great deal about the realities of Soviet dictatorship and terror. He had never heard of Chambers before, and he was characteristically disinclined to see any evidence of a plot or danger against himself. None the less he concluded that even if there was no question about the authenticity of Chambers' story, it would be unwise to meet him. Under his benign manner, Dewey was a canny Vermonter. He pointed out that even if the public took Chambers at his word, his sponsorship of Chambers' return to public life would be seized upon by the Kremlin and its agents to discredit the work of the Commission. Dewey set great store on the effect of the Commission's final report. Anything that would provide a handle to charge him with political bias or factional interest had to be avoided. It would be better, therefore, if Chambers found another way of coming back to life.

I could not but agree with the wisdom and prudence of Dewey's decision. Solow was very disappointed when I informed him of it and accused me of not trying hard enough. He kept on about the immediate and growing danger to Chambers' life. Whereupon I urged Solow to advise Chambers to adopt the following "life-insurance" policy: to draw up a detailed list of all the Soviet operatives he knew, all the "sleepers" in Washington and elsewhere, anyone who had given him any information whether party member or not; to describe in comprehensive detail when, where, and how they transmitted it, and its content; and to mail a copy of the document to Earl Browder, by then the undisputed head of the American Communist Party and liaison man with the Soviet espionage recruitment apparatus, with a letter informing him that the notarised original had been deposited in a safe-deposit vault with instructions to executor and friends to publish it in the event anything untoward happened to him. The only alternative to this was for Chambers to make public his whole story at once by taking it to a newspaper (preferably the *New York Herald-Tribune*, not likely to be friendly to the administration). The chief difficulty with the second course was that he would still have to go into hiding to escape retaliation. On the first plan, I argued, the Kremlin would be far more interested in preventing his story from being told than in punishing him and would probably let him alone so long as its agents couldn't get their hands on his original copy. Solow thought that the "life insurance" policy was a sound idea. I promised that after Chambers did this, once the Dewey Commission had made its final report I would take up the matter of a possible meeting with Dewey once again if Chambers was still interested.

Subsequently Solow assured me that he had transmitted my advice to Chambers who had decided to follow it. He had even discussed with Solow some of the things he would put into the letter to Browder. We must conclude, however, that either Chambers never really consented, or

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he changed his mind and never carried out the plan. Had he done so he could have introduced in evidence a decade later the original of the document presumably mailed to Browder.

In all probability had he followed my advice there would have been no occasion for producing the document. For if Browder had received Chambers' letter and documents, Hiss and the other members of his cell would have been informed through the appropriate channels of their existence. Either they would have phased themselves out of government service or they would have taken a different line of defence in 1948. Of the seven men Chambers originally indentified as members of his cell, only Alger and Donald Hiss denied membership; five took legal refuge under the Fifth Amendment, one of whom, Lee Pressman (Counsel for the C.I.O.), subsequently confessed. Julian Wadleigh—whom Chambers also identified as one of his other sources of purloined classified material—proudly acknowledged the truth of Chambers' testimony without any fear of prosecution (the statute of limitations having run). In any event, it is overwhelmingly likely that Hiss would not have sued Chambers for libel and risked bringing that document—(if it existed)—into court; its motivation would have been clear, and all the fantastic explanations of "why Chambers named Hiss" by Hiss's defenders would have shattered against it. That motivation was sheer, stark fear of his life. It was not the sudden vision of God that Chambers retrospectively read into his break with Communism. It is interesting that Donald Hiss never sued Chambers for libel. Although two other persons, Hedda Massing and Nathaniel Weyl, had independently of Chambers identified, Hiss as a member of the Communist Party, they were not sued.

I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED why Chambers did not act on my advice, and when I questioned Solow about it at the time of the trials, he seemed puzzled, too. It may be that Chambers was relying on the incriminating documents he had squirrelled away (which he finally produced at the deposition in the libel suit). But what protection was that if those who were pursuing him did not know of their existence? It could be that he feared that after Earl Browder received his letter and memorandum the whole operation would be closed down, the members of the cells and other informants scattered, and, after a lapse of time, the hunt for him resumed. Once he was liquidated or kidnapped, the revelations of his original memorandum could have been dismissed as the fantastic concoctions of a psychopathic personality against "impeccable" men of reputation and social status, loyally serving their government. A friend of Chambers has speculated that Chambers did send the letter and memorandum—not to Browder but to his Soviet superiors, and in this way guaranteed his safety. But if so why did he not produce the original when he had the most need of it? At one point his despair was so great (when a mistaken analysis of the microfilm seemed to call its date into question) that he attempted suicide. Had the memorandum I advised him to draw up been in existence, it would never have come to that.

WHEN CHAMBERS FIRST publicly identified his fellow-conspirators the names were quite familiar to me. They were the same as the ones he gave Solow in 1938. We had discussed them several times since we were as mystified as Chambers himself by the fact that those named remained in government service after he had given the information to Berle. Years later, in 1953, I questioned Berle about the incident and its aftermath. He painted a very vivid picture of the confusion that prevailed in Washington at the time Chambers showed up in his office. World War II had begun, "the world was falling to pieces around us." None the less despite his initial incredulity at the bizarre tale, he steadfastly insisted that he had sent word of Chambers' story to the White House. He ended up convinced that it was true.

I recall that in Chambers' first public identification I was struck by the absence of the one name that meant anything to me among those mentioned by Chambers to Solow in 1938. That was Lawrence Duggan. I asked Solow about the discrepancy. He subsequently told me that when he reminded Chambers about it the latter said the omission of Duggan's name was no lapse, that he felt sorry for him, and that even if Duggan had not drifted away from the party he was in no position to do much harm.

To return to the sequence of events. After I relayed John Dewey's decision I heard no more from Chambers who, I assumed, had given up the idea of acquiring a public existence. Then one day he acted upon it. He crashed a reception for Dewey and the other Commissioners of the Mexico hearings that was being held at the home of Anita Brenner (she lived at that time with her physician husband, David Glusker, in a brownstone house at 38 Eighth Avenue, the Park Slope section of Brooklyn). It was Halloween Eve. The large basement living room had been festooned with pumpkin lanterns. By dusk all the guests had arrived. They consisted of persons who had been most active in the struggle to uncover the truth about the Moscow Trials or

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who, like Margaret de Silver, had financially supported it. Considering the odds against us, it had turned out amazingly successful.

There were no speeches. The atmosphere was unwontedly gay and relaxed. When the festivities were at their height, in walked Whittaker Chambers. He was shepherded by Herbert Solow who had informed no one that he intended to bring a guest. Whittaker Chambers had emerged into the light. Of the thirty-five or so persons who were gathered there that night, probably ten had met him before in some literary or political connection that went back to 1932 (not counting Trilling or Solow); most of the rest had heard of him. A whisper, "Whittaker Chambers is here!", spread to every corner of the house. Even those to whom his name meant nothing were conscious of the sudden hush that fell on the assemblage. Those who knew him nodded to him in a distant and casual way as if they had seen him only yesterday. But no one approached him except the wife of one of his old acquaintances and the hostess, Anita Brenner, with whom he danced once or twice.

The atmosphere became strained and awkward despite the efforts at animated conversation among the rest of us. Perhaps three-quarters-of-an-hour later—it seemed much longer—Solow, red with fury and a sense of guilt, stalked out with Chambers in tow. Chambers left with the same fixed and sickly smile on his face with which he entered. The only persons who were unaware of Chambers' coming and going were John Dewey and Roberta Lowitz, the future second Mrs Dewey. If Solow and Chambers had planned to short-circuit me in order to establish their own contact with Dewey they had failed.

THE FROSTY RECEPTION Chambers got was due to the fact that most—indeed, almost all—were unaware that Chambers had broken with the Communist Party. They were indignant because to them he still represented the dreaded enemy. Had he not come with the protective presence of Herbert Solow (whose passionate zeal in combating Stalinists and Stalinist fellow-travellers was well known) he would have been turned out. I recall that Elliott Cohen was particularly wroth with Solow, fuming at his "irresponsible conduct", from which I inferred that although close to Solow, he was not privy to what was going on. I was annoyed because Solow knew that Dewey and the other Commissioners would be present, and I had thought he understood the wisdom of keeping the main issues of the Moscow Trials unentangled with Chambers' case and fate. I was convinced that Stalin had more to fear from the report of the Dewey Commission than from a score of defectors like Chambers. In the perspective of succeeding years I believe I was right.

When I upbraided Solow for bringing his uninvited guest, he justified himself with the feeble response that at least thirty or more people now knew that Chambers was alive. Subsequently Solow was to argue with me and others that this event played a great and symbolic role in Chambers' mind as an act of political resurrection, indeed that it was the real clue to the selection of a hollowed-out pumpkin within which to conceal the microfilm evidence that incriminated Hiss! The symbols that surrounded him at the time he came back to life unconsciously influenced him when he was seeking to preserve that life against resurgent attack.

I NEVER SAW Chambers again although Solow kept in touch with him over the years. From Solow and another friend of Chambers, I heard about his difficulties in readjusting to the daylight world until he acquired his position at *Time*. Gradually it became common knowledge in radical circles that he had broken with the Communist Party. That he had been an underground man was not news. With the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the outbreak of the Second World War, the political atmosphere changed. The Communists were thrown on the defensive and their hegemony on the New York cultural front (which was more widespread and effective than has been generally realised) was shattered. But fear of the Soviet underground apparatus did not abate in knowledgeable, politically active Left circles especially after the assassination of Leon Trotsky in 1940. The NKVD caught up with General Walter Krivitsky who was "suicided" in a Washington hotel room. Juliet Stuart Poyntz was kidnapped and probably liquidated. Chambers must still have trembled in fear of his life. The tide of history turned once more when Hitler double-crossed his loyal ally and invaded

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the Soviet Union, and then declared war against the USA after Pearl Harbour. This made the American and the Russian co-belligerents. Unfortunately in the eyes of the ideological illiterates in Washington like Harry Hopkins and others, co-belligerency was interpreted as "allies in the cause of democracy and freedom." Had Chambers spoken out publicly during the War years, he probably would have been denounced as an "agent of Hitler" trying to sow discord in the democratic camp. Were it not for the revelations (by Gouzenko, a clerk who defected with secret files from the Soviet Embassy in Ottowa) about the Soviet-Canadian spy ring, and the resumption and intensification of the Cold War by Stalin after the defeat of Hitler, the whole question of Soviet penetration of American governmental agencies would have been considered "a red herring", a political manoeuvre by reactionaries to discredit Franklin Roosevelt, the Democrats, and the New Deal.

OCCUPYING A PRESTIGIOUS and well-paid position on *Time*, having found domestic happiness and acquired a circle of new intimate friends, Whittaker Chambers must have bitterly rued the day when he yielded to the solicitations of Isaac Don Levine and others who induced him to tell his story. For it had led inexorably to the subpoena from the Congressional Committee. He may have felt trapped by his earlier confessions. But since they were not made under oath, he could have, under the guidance of skilful legal counsel, avoided further involvement by invoking the Fifth Amendment. It probably would have cost him his job with Henry Luce (which he was to lose anyhow). He chose the more heroic path although I believe that if he had anticipated the Golgotha to which he was to be subjected, he would have chosen otherwise. His new religious *Weltanschauung* undoubtedly influenced his decision.

Chambers became deeply religious *after* he broke with the Communist movement and found some breathing and thinking space in the uneasy years in which he had eluded his trackers (or in which they lost interest in him). His religious ideas were an attempt to make sense of his life; and, unfortunately, he sought to derive his views on history and politics from them. His great error in which he persuaded others, too, was to see in the "ritualistic liberals"—for whom no enemies could possibly exist on the self-denominated Left—the genuine contemporary embodiment of the liberal tradition from Jefferson to Dewey. In the end he also turned completely against the authentic liberal tradition. For him the main point about his book *Witness* (1952)—which led him to mythologise about the causes of his original break with the Kremlin—was the question whether God exists. As he put it (in a posthumously published reflection on the deeper meaning of the agonising episodes of his life): "If God exists, a man cannot be a Communist, which begins with a rejection of God, but if God does not exist, it follows that Communism, or some suitable variant of it, is right." Dostoevsky said it long before him, and more simply, with the words he puts into the mouth of Smerdyakov: "If God doesn't exist, everything is permissable." It seemed to me then, and still does, that they are wrong on all counts. Augustine and Karl Barth could have taught Whittaker Chambers that God can get along with both the Caesars and the Commissars. If God is completely Other, one can believe in Him and still do anything one pleases. Chambers apparently failed to recall that at the moment when he rejected Communism with its strategy of terror and deceit he was just as much a disbeliever as when he first embraced Communism. God is never the source or the justification of man's moral judgment, for He is always created in man's own moral image. When Chambers thought he had "found God", he was essentially rediscovering certain basic moral truths that rest on no theology.

LIKE MUCH GREATER FIGURES before and after him—Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Schweitzer, Gandhi, Solzhenitsyn—what Chambers was protesting against when he tried to make sense of the shambles of his life and times was the secularisation of the world, an irreversible process bound up with the development of experimental science, and "the invention of the method of invention" (Whitehead) in natural affairs. Secularisation, to be sure, *may* end up in totalitarian communism but only if the rationale of scientific inquiry —its openness to all members of the community, its tentativeness, its rejection of institutional and personal authority, its scrupulous fidelity to evidence—in human and social affairs is destroyed. There is no historic necessity for such an outcome provided a passion for human freedom informs our domestic and foreign policy. The religious view of the world becomes sensitive to human freedom only when it is being persecuted. Actually the most trying test of the survival of religious belief is not so much normal persecution as complete religious tolerance. Where religion acquires institutional stability and authority it is relatively indifferent to political freedom (except when a religion expresses the nationalist aspirations of a minority

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oppressed by a foreign power as in Ireland or Poland).

The "final conflict" in our age is not between religious belief and unbelief. It is between the democratic form of secularisation, dedicated to the broadest religious tolerance, and the totalitarian forms of secularisation intolerant not only of religion but of all variations in art, philosophy and other works of the human spirit. In that struggle Whittaker Chambers and those who think like him are uncertain allies because of their insistence on lumping all the "secularists", all the "naturalists" together. Just as those who propagated the doctrine of Social-Fascism weakened the struggle against Fascism by splitting and confusing the ranks of those opposed to it, so today those who insist on lumping liberals with Communists—and humanists who are staunch defenders of religious freedom with the militant atheists of Iron Curtain countries—weaken the struggle against totalitarian Communism.

In No Time

Wednesday July the 26th
Nineteen seventy-two,
Which mayn't mean much to you,
Was—at least on a Buddhist view—
  My dearest, deepest day.

  Nothing whatever happened.
I didn't even breathe
—Literally! The whole seethe
Of love, hate, thought, faith
  In world or woman wasn't.

  We flew at mid-Pacific
In a flick—not even that:
No skip of the heartbeat
Or drop of the jet's note—
  From 25th to 27th.

  M 31 in Andromeda,
Northward blur of light
—The limit of naked sight—
Declared distance right:
  But duration's by days!

  Metaphysic? conceit?
Then why the odd feeling
Of the missed, conceived thing,
An absurd soft sting?
  Ten thousand metres below

  The International Date Line
Lay, abstract, upon a smooth-
looking, starlit wraith
Of a sea. Faintest froth
  Outlined unnaturally

  Regular walls—artefact
Of polyps, not thought,
Each, though, a seeming fort
Strung silent in support
  On the Tongan approaches. . . .

  Well, what (which I've not done)
Of those who gain a day
Going the other way
With the same date twice? Do they,
  Would I, come to that,

  "Have my time over again"
At least that once? Correct
Retrieved regret, perfect
A little some lapsed act
  Of Nandi or Suva

  In Papeete? But that's a mere
Thought, and I yet feel
As in a crazed way real
My lost unwasted shell
  With whorls of nothing.

  Days after one in the Nineteen-
blanks (or Twenty-blanks if I last
A little longer than most)
Will have the same taste
  Perhaps: sweet or insipid?

  What coronals of answers! . . .
As for that Wednesday the rest
Of you had but I missed
—Was mine really the best?
  We arrive at ourselves.

Robert Conquest

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EAST & WEST

Letter from India

By Minoo Masani

YOU HAVE ASKED ME for a postscript to the conclusions in my little book *Is JP the Answer?*, extracts from which I understand you are reproducing in ENCOUNTER. It is not an easy assignment at a time like this, but I feel like responding in view of my old association with ENCOUNTER and your own warm invitation.

Perhaps I should explain that I retired from active politics as far back as 1971. I have since attempted to view the scene, even when a good friend like Jayaprakash Narayan is involved, as a student of history and it is as a student of history that I have observed the sad events of the last four months in our country.

Under the heading of "The Prime Minister's Options", I sketched in my book the alternatives of a confrontation *à outrance* on the one hand and an adjustment between the Prime Minister and Jayaprakash Narayan on the other. Things have moved in a very different direction from what I had suggested was in the country's interest, but I must confess to being somewhat unrepentant on this point. It can hardly be claimed that what has happened during the past four months has proved my fears about the dangerous consequences of a clash to be unfounded.

MINOO MASANI, *whose portrait of Jayaprakash Narayan appeared in the December issue of* ENCOUNTER, *is a Member of the Liberal International and a Member of the Executive Committee of the All-India P.E.N. Centre. He is the author of several books including "Our India", India's all-time bestseller.*

Mr Masani withdrew from the Presidentship of the Swatantra Party, India's major opposition party, in 1971. *In earlier years he participated in the struggle for India's independence, and was thrice imprisoned. A member of Parliament for over two decades, he has also been Mayor of Bombay, India's Ambassador to Brazil, and Chairman of the United Nations Sub-Commission for the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities.*

True, some readers of the censored Press and users of the Government-controlled Radio and Television may perhaps be led to think so. Isn't everything quiet? Has not discipline been restored in the factory, the secretariat of government, and the campus, and have not illegal strikes been eliminated? Do not trains run on time? Is it not true that there has not been a single act of violence and that the Emergency has been welcomed by the people at large?

If that is so why, one may ask, are thousands, including men and women of influence in the country and the leaders of democratic parties, still imprisoned? Why are *détenus* under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act held in prison without a reason being given and without recourse allowed to the Courts of Law which are valiantly trying to perform their duties under the Constitution? Why are Jayaprakash Narayan and some other distinguished *détenus* kept incommunicado and denied company?[1] Why is it necessary for the Press to be fettered and denied the right to comment *inter alia* on the Emergency, on Parliamentary proceedings, and on the Supreme Court proceedings on the Prime Minister's case according to the latest guideline which is held out as a "relaxation" of press censorship?

The nature of this alleged relaxation is evidenced by the fact that even at the end of October the number of political prisoners, the arrest of individuals and the location of *détenus* were not allowed to be published in the newspapers. So too the very fact of censorship and the contents of the "guidelines" issued from time to time. In mid-October, I addressed in the capital of Gujarat —which possesses a non-Congress Government— an All-India Civil Liberties Conference attended by around 1,000 people, presided over by a former Chief Justice of India and inaugurated by a former Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, who had also been a Cabinet Minister and an Ambassador. Next morning, not a line was allowed to appear about that event in the nation's Press. Is it any wonder that such a situation breeds a crop of rumours, many unfounded, which follow one another in quick succession?

AS EDITOR of a little monthly named *Freedom First*, I decided right from the start not to submit to the whims and fancies of the censor. I therefore suspended publication of the monthly and applied to the High Court of Bombay for a writ of mandamus against the censor. That was on

[1] This was written shortly before the ailing Narayan was released on parole (in mid November) to obtain urgent medical attention.—ED. NOTE.

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17 July. My writ was admitted by the High Court, but I am still waiting for the matter to come up for hearing.

The saddest part of it all is that the reasons given for the Declaration of Emergency and the steps taken under it are far from convincing. There was no clear and present danger to the security of the State. True, there was a threat of civil disobedience to press the Prime Minister to resign in the light of the judgment of the Allahabad High Court unseating her on an election petition; but such a situation could have been dealt with under the existing laws. Certain positive steps taken during the last four months (such as the observance of discipline by various sections of the public: including Government employees who report for work on time and the maintenance of queues at bus stops) could surely have been achieved without the severe repression which has accompanied them? To imagine that arbitrary power in the hands of the executive, which is not subject to judicial review, can function for long without oppression is an illusion. The discipline of fear, which is what we have now, is always deceptive. It deprives those in authority of knowledge of the extent of dissatisfaction among the people and of dissent from official policies, with the result that they tend to get more and more out of touch with the realities of the situation, as has been proved by the history of developments in other countries. It is a prescription for popular alienation which (as Mr Pyarelal, who was Mahatma Gandhi's secretary, wrote in the *Indian Express* on Gandhiji's birthday on 2 October this year) "may take the form of a word or a look, a sign—even silence. It cannot be suppressed."

The solution, if it can be called that, is an extremely short-term one. One can only quote what a writer has to say in the journal *Blitz* of 25 October:

> "Though no all-India party has been banned, all activity was immobilized. A strange inertia seems to have descended on them . . . . The forces of bitterness and resentment have not died; they have gone underground. Party politics has become subterranean."

This is something that only a fellow-travelling journal would be permitted to publish.

HOW TO DESCRIBE our present situation which has something of the nature of a nightmare? I would certainly not describe it as either a Fascist or Communist dictatorship. I see it as a limited form of authoritarianism from which one can go down the slope to totalitarianism or revert to democratic procedures. One of the more cheering aspects of the situation is that it is reversible. Indeed, the Prime Minister's repeated public statements that she continues to believe in democracy, that the repressive measures have brought no pleasure to her, and that the Emergency is temporary and will be terminated as soon as the changed situation warrants it, are encouraging straws in the wind. It may then be asked: what are we waiting for? The Prime Minister's answer is that it is for the opposition to manifest a change of heart. But, assuming that the leaders of the campaign against her have had second thoughts, how are they supposed to express them when they are held in solitary confinement and can neither meet one another nor their colleagues outside?

In such a setting, what is the role of the liberal democrat? It is, in my view, to eschew romanticism on the one hand and craven fear on the other. He should endeavour, to whatever little extent may be possible within the limits of legality, to assert the rights of the citizen and to seek to expand the bounds of freedom, for in such a climate even normal calm and courage have a therapeutic value. At the same time the liberal will accept the need for a measure of self-discipline. He will endeavour to address those in authority in the spirit of the Russian proverb: "The yes-man is your enemy, but your friend will argue with you." Our friend Kukrit Pramoj, now Prime Minister of Thailand, set a rather good example of this kind of posture when he functioned as editor of a daily newspaper for several years under an authoritarian régime.

The liberal, maintaining a sense of history, will also bear in mind that there are historical reasons for such developments and that a resort to demonology explains little. He will recall the fragility of India's democratic institutions; the way in which the Indian politician, by and large, played the fool; the absence of an infra-structure of grassroots vigilance. He will recall warnings given by many of us during the 1960s that a highly controlled economy, public sector monopolies, the combination of political and economic power in the same hands and a general acceptance of Statism under the slogan of "socialism" cannot be expected to co-exist for long with democratic processes. Bearing all this in mind, the liberal will endeavour to find common ground between the warring parties and to heal the wounds of a divided nation.

HAPPILY, ALL PARTIES, whether in Government or opposition, are agreed that the people of India should be free to decide their des-

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tiny through a general election to Parliament, and the Prime Minister has more than once said that elections will be held as soon as the necessary conditions come into existence. She is right in making this reservation as it is obvious that under prevailing conditions—with the kind of censorship of the Press that exists, the detention in prison of a large number of men and women of influence in the country and the threat of detention without cause and without trial under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act—no election that would enjoy any credibility could take place. It is obvious that in order that an election campaign can be conducted fairly and freely there will have to be freedom of expression and discussion on the platform and in the press over a reasonable period of time. It has also to be conceded that, in order that an election can take place in a calm and orderly fashion, extra-constitutional weapons would have to be set aside. Many people in India see no reason why some such arrangement cannot be worked out in the national interest, reinforced by considerations of legitimacy and democratic durability. Any other approach is likely to lead to tragedy, and tragedy is probably the aim of those who, like the Communists, seek to intensify the conflict.

The present régime offers the traditional promise of all authoritarian systems so aptly described recently by a writer in the *New Statesman*, "a perfect future in return for no questions asked." Its long-term stability is dubious unless it can give the people a demonstrably better life within two or three years' time. The threat to Mrs Indira Gandhi's government comes not so much from Jayaprakash Narayan and the opposition parties as from the eventuality of a failure to deliver the goods.

PUT VERY BRIEFLY, the question is whether the Government with its present policies, which are not far removed from what in England is known as "Bennery", can generate a surplus of around 10 million tons of food-grains in place of the current deficit which has called for imports this year of around 5 million tons. The answer to that problem lies in the provision of inputs such as water from tube wells and minor irrigation works on the one hand and the flow of consumer goods at reasonable prices to the countryside on the other. The two are interrelated. Indeed, to the extent that most consumer goods in India are not consumer-durables but "basic" goods like food-grains, cotton textiles, vegetable oil products and leather goods—which in turn are heavily dependent on agriculture—this flow of consumer goods is itself a function of our success in agriculture. Given our failure on the agricultural front, it is not surprising that the *per capita* index of basic consumption goods (except only for radios, bicycles and sugar) has been stagnant or declining all the way since Independence. On the other hand, industry too is stagnating and its major units, both in the private and the Government sectors, are facing the worst demand recession since Independence.

All this can be mended only by a reversal of the counter-productive policies and priorities of the successive Five Year Plans; a positive attitude to foreign capital investment; the diversion of scarce resources to agriculture and consumer goods industries made possible by the abandonment of an expenditure of between 480 and 650 million rupees per annum on Atomic Energy and a drastic cut in Defence expenditure, which would in turn call for a shift in foreign policy. If this is not done, unemployment will go on growing and inflation will again resume its stride after a short pause. If economic failure becomes clear in two or three years' time, what price political stability? True, the Indian people are fairly docile. True, "verbal socialism" may act for a while as a soothing syrup. True, the resilience of the Indian people is something to be admired. But, as the phrase goes, "even the worm turns."

IN THIS SULTRY WEATHER comes a breath of fresh air from an unexpected quarter—the Prime Minister's son, Sanjay Gandhi. In an interview for a periodical journal, extracts from which were published in sections of the press on 28 August despite the efforts of the censors to countermand their original sanction, Mr Gandhi argued strongly against nationalisation. He said he would not mind the Government sector being "allowed to die a natural death" where "it cannot function in competition with the private sector." Mr Gandhi argued for increased production through the restoration of competition, the removal of controls, and the reduction of taxes. While few things in India have been discussed so much in conversation in recent weeks, there has not been a single comment on it, whether friendly or critical, permitted in the censored Press. Perhaps, therefore, in a situation as full of enigmas as this, may I end my letter with a question mark as to what this statement, coming from where it does, implies and what its implications for the future might be?

Yours sincerely,
MINOO MASANI

Bombay
30 October 1975

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LETTERS

Havel's "Open Letter"

I CANNOT RESIST the urge to write and tell you how enormously impressed I am by Vaclav Havel's "An Open Letter From Prague" [ENCOUNTER September].

The combination of eloquence, wisdom and courage displayed is quite staggering. Although many of the situations and events dealt with are profoundly depressing, one is left in the end with a paradoxical sense of cheerfulness and uplift, akin to that produced by witnessing a first-class performance in the theatre of a great tragedy.

Indeed, the overall impression left by Mr Havel's piece to some extent belies a number of the specific pessimistic statements made within it. As long as there is one person left in Czechoslovakia capable of thinking and writing this kind of letter, there seems to me some hope for Czechoslovakia—and for the rest of us.

DAVID MCQUEEN

Principal,
Glendon College,
York University,
Toronto, Ontario.

Kedourie's Hammarskjöld

IN THE LIGHT of Professor Elie Kedourie's conclusion [ENCOUNTER, August] that Hammarskjöld, "searching confidently for one knows not what, fell in an obscure forlorn, far-away place", it could be argued that he had realised his goal and had been allowed the possibility he had faced in the early 1950s, of a death without significance. In the three years before his election as Secretary-General, Hammarsjköld had felt his life to be without purpose, and had devoted much time to an exploration of his trouble in *Markings* (1966). In a profound meditation on the life of Christ (*Markings*, p. 72) he explored the tensions Christ felt as he considered the various possibilities open to him, and noted particularly his readiness to accept a death which might be without significance, as his right and proper way. It was an example which was of great help to him, as it has been to countless others since, without their being accused of severe spiritual pride.

Professor Kedourie quotes the "Marking" from p. 133 about his responsibility for God:

> "Your responsibility is indeed terrifying. If you fail it is God, thanks to your having betrayed Him, who will fail mankind. You fancy you can be responsible *to* God; can you carry the responsibility *for* God?"

Gustaf Aulen reveals in his analysis of *Markings, Dag Hammarskjöld's White Book* (SPCK, London 1969), that there is a discrepancy here between the original Swedish and W. H. Auden's English translation. Aulen explains (p. 148) that this "Marking" is a rare instance of Hammarskjöld's use of the word "our" and should open: "How terrifying OUR responsibility." Hammarskjöld was fully aware he shared man's immense responsiblity with every other human being. The opening four words set the context for the remaining sentences in which he talks of his work as the elected Secretary General of the United Nations. If man betrays God, then it is God who fails mankind. He focuses on a reality which most of us would rather not face, but the truth of it can hardly be denied. He did not see himself as a new Messiah, but as a human being who was conscious of the responsibility placed upon him.

July 29th, 1975, would have been Hammarskjöld's 70th birthday. It is to be hoped that future memorials to his work might be more understanding, not only of his spirituality, but appreciative of his political contribution and judgment. Perhaps Dr Henry Kissinger with his shuttle diplomacy is one such heir.

DAVID GOODACRE

St. Paul's Vicarage,
Ryhope, Sunderland

Sufi

WITH REFERENCE TO the article "Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism" in your May 1975 issue, your contributor L. P. Elwell-Sutton may recall the advice of Arif Yahya on the subject of "unorthodox" teachers:

> "Do not expect the way in which they bring their teaching to be wholly within your ordinary way of understanding. A pearl may be carried in a leather purse. The ignorant cry out: 'This square object with the flap does not look like the necklace which has been described to me'."

By arguing that Idries Shah does not fit into an authentic ("spiritual") Sufi mould, your contributor re-enacts the classic situation in which individuals down the ages have attacked Sufi teachers for not being "religious" enough. In the 10th century A.D. it was the liberal views of the physician ibn Sina (Avicenna) which suffered this fate; in the 12th century the Master Sanai, noted for his love imagery, and the philosopher El-Ghazali, whose books were burned by his critics, were similarly castigated. The turn of the literary genius Hakim Jami came in the 15th century, when religious enthusiasts misquoted his work in their attempts to discredit him.

The examples are numerous. There always seem to have been people who, in their preoccupation with outward piety, have failed to grasp that Sufism is organic, not repetitive; that the true teacher teaches for his own time—not the time before. Any person who was to appear now as a sort of carbon copy Saadi or Hafiz, and attempt to apply in our atom-splitting space age the methods and phraseology born of the needs of the 11th, 12th or even 19th centuries—he indeed might be judged an impostor.

The contention that Idries Shah does not repeat the words "God" and "love" sufficiently often seems at variance with the ideas of Jalaluddin Rumi—whom your contributor concedes is an authentic Sufi—when he wrote about love in the *Masnavi*:

> "Explanation by the tongue makes most things clear,
> But love unexplained is clearer."
>
> (tr. E. H. Whinfield)

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Discussing God, in Rumi's view, also has its limitations. As he writes in the Prologue to his *Masnavi* tales:

"Can I explain 'The Friend' [God] to one to whom
He is no friend? . . . .
. . . 'Tis best to veil the secrets of 'The Friend'.
So give good heed to the morals of these stories.
That is better than that the secrets of 'The Friend'
Should be noised abroad in the talk of strangers."

As for Sufism being "not concerned with the betterment of the human race", your contributor claims that "Sufism is a deeply-rooted product of Islam"—one of the four main duties of which is charity and compassion for fellow human beings. Rumi's approving description of Daqúqi shows the latter as a man,

"Having compassion on mankind, and wholesome as water,
A kind intercessor, and one whose prayers were heard.
Benevolent to the good and the bad, and a firm ally,
Better than a mother, and kinder than a father."

*Words, Words, Words (III)**

THE WRITING OF *blurbs for book jackets or publishers' catalogues is a difficult art, and the results commonly please no one, and certainly not the author of the book. Here is a specimen which at least possesses the putative virtues of accuracy, informativeness and modesty:*

"We have little hesitation in claiming that this relatively new book by Mr X represents an advance on the author's previous one, which nonetheless received rather favourable mention in a leading provincial newspaper. The present book is well written, in a style which combines the gritty with the fluid. Not so much a novel as an extended documentary prose-poem, it is an account of good and evil in a contemporary setting and all of us, whether men or women. 'The Spenser of Trollopes' is how the Eriskay Reporter *has described Mr X. . . ."*

And so forth. Mind you, there is one class of persons who appreciate blurbs: the reviewers. Many a brilliantly mordant review owes more to the blurb than to the book, or to the reviewer.

Not long ago I found myself having to shorten a number of blurbs, for an overcrowded list of forthcoming publications. From 250 words to 150, to 100, then to 50. Impossible though further cutting seemed each time, yet it proved not only possible but preferable as well: finally I arrived at an admirably economical description of the essence of the book. But then I had to go and put words back in. Readers aren't happy with essences, whether in blurbs or in books: it seems they need a generous emulsion of words in which their minds can float comfortably; they need a fair amount of verbal roughage, or of verbal smoothage. Many of the words don't get noticed at all, and if all that was offered were essence, then the essence might go unobserved. I know we were taught that in great writing every word is strictly necessary, and cannot be replaced by any other, and there is not a superfluous syllable. I'm sure that is true. But I don't think I am talking about great *writing—there is never very much of that on the scene at any one time. I don't think I am talking about great readers, either. Heaven help the poor publisher if he had to depend solely on great writers and great readers!*

SOME WRITERS ARE NOT **very good at reading their own writing, even. Recently I was studying a book by an academic, the theme of which was the symbolism of excretory processes in the works of Virginia Woolf: a new insight into this celebrated novelist, I should imagine, and one likely to show how highly "relevant" she is. The scholar had been discussing a story entitled "The Ladies' Lavatory", and went on in the next sentence to refer to a novel called** *Flush.* **As a matter of fact I did know that** *Flush* **was the name of a dog, but the associations evoked by the contiguity were such as to demolish that suspension of disbelief so often required when reading academic exegesis.**

Mistakes or insensitivities incurred by people writing in a language not their own is a different matter, not open to contempt or reproach. Sometimes they have a splendour of their own. I remember in the late 1940s being impressed by an Egyptian student's reference to "this Age of Atomic Pomp": it evoked a romantic image of nuclear reactors in the shape of great pyramids, with the Sphinx brooding over them. A little later I realised that the confusion between "P" and "B" was at work, this being a distinction non-existent in Arabic—in fact we use the forms "Pasha" and "Basha" indifferently, since the original sound is somewhere in between. What the student actually had in mind was the atomic bomb.

BUT BACK TO OUR BLURBS. **The dictionary tells us only that the word "blurb" originated in U.S. slang. My theory has it that the word is a skilful conflation of a number of other words, among them "blur", "bluff", "blub", "blush", "bluster", "burble", "babble", "burp" and "blunder." As I say, a difficult art.**

D. J. Enright

* Previous columns in this series appeared in ENCOUNTER, November and December.

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There is, in other words, nothing surprising about a 20th-century Sufi who, far from confining himself to writing about God, actively involves himself in such human betterment projects as (to name only a few) the Royal Humane Society, the Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables (in both of which is he a Governor), the Club of Rome (concerned with saving world ecology), and the conducting of studies in inter-religious harmony in his capacity as Visiting Professor at Geneva University.

"Unorthodox" methods? Look twice at them, said Zahid of the Khajagan:

> "When you see a Sufi studying or teaching something which seems to belong to a field other than spirituality, you should know that *there* is the spirituality of the age."

J. M. JUSTICE

Somerset West,
South Africa

Is J. M. JUSTICE really under the impression that Rumi mentions the subjects of God and Love as rarely as does Idries Shah? Perhaps he should try reading some of his work—preferably in the original.

Ahmed Bullock (Letters, October) must, as a bookseller, be aware that J. D. Pearson's *Index Islamicus* is a bibliographical work, and as such solely concerned with the subject-matter of the entries included in it. It is no secret that Idries Shah is a prolific scribbler; but I have no reason to suppose that Jim Pearson's assessment of the quality of his work differs in any respect from my own.

L. P. ELWELL-SUTTON

Edinburgh

Nabokov's "N"

IN HIS REVIEW of Nabokov's novel *Look At The Harlequins* [ENCOUNTER, June, p. 79] Jonathan Raban makes a familiar but irritating error, and in doing so misses an important point about the book. "Vadimovich" is not the surname of Nabokov's hero, but rather his middle name, or patronymic. All Russians have a name, middle name and surname—as in, for example, Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov. Thus the hero of LATH is Vadim Vadimovich Something or Other. What the something or other is we are never told, but a clear hint is offered on pp. 248–249 of the novel:

> "I definitely felt my family name began with an N, and bore an odious resemblance to the surname or pseudonym of a presumably notorious . . . writer with whom scatterbrained émigrés from some other galaxy constantly confused me."

The distorted parallel with Nabokov himself is thus made even more explicit. But since we don't actually know the fictional hero's name, we must refer to him—politely—as "Vadim Vadimovich", or else simply as "Vadim." The patronymic "Vadimovich" on its own has an inappropriate ring of undue familiarity to it. Perhaps Nabokov is best dealt with by specialists in Russian rather than American or European literature.

RICHARD OWEN

London

Comrade Bukharin

AFTER ALL that has been written and said about "the Case of Comrade Bukharin" (Sidney Hook, ENCOUNTER, December 1974, and David S. Anin, April 1975) and the causes of his "strange" behaviour in the 1930s, may I briefly suggest the following hypotheses?

1. Bukharin returned to Russia because:

(a) Staying abroad would have classified him as an émigré, with all its implications for a Bolshevik which need hardly be elaborated.

(b) He could not emotionally and psychologically sever his ties with Russian politics, especially as he must have known that "Bukharinism" as such—unlike Trotskyism—would be quite *meaningless* as a movement outside Russia.

(c) In spite of what he told French and Russian associates he did not really believe that he was certain to kiss the Cross on the Mountain if he returned. He merely related a definite probability in dramatic terms.

2. He confessed to the crimes which he had not committed mainly because, in the end, he was not quite sure—at least in a futuristic sense—who was right! This, in my view, is a better interpretation of Arthur Koestler's theory than the popular "last-service-to-the-party."

It may be observed that in offering these hypotheses I merely make the likely assumption that Bukharin remained a Bolshevik in spirit until his death.

M. A. KATOUZIAN

Rutherford College,
The University,
Canterbury, Kent

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London

SIC TRANSIT GLORIA NOVA: *Once upon a time, when our mothers were young, there was a phenomenon known as the Woman's Magazine. Traditionally it contained recipes, respectful articles about the Royal family, penny-saving hints and a problem page where girls who had Got Into Trouble were advised to consult their vicars.*

Then, in 1965, a new star burst upon the scene called Nova and started to publish articles about orgasms, psychotherapy, the joys of living in sin and the scandal of housewives on drugs. It was a brilliant success and a great pointer to the times.

Now the publishers, the International Publishing Corporation have announced that after October Nova will cease to exist. That is another pointer to the times: economy, and the shrinking amount of glossy advertising in this market. No reflection on the content of Nova, say IPC, but the editor, Gillian Cooke, agrees that all the same it is symbolic of how everything has changed once more between 1965 and 1975.

Nova, in the sixties, stood for everything that was urbane, intelligent, ultra-sophisticated and trendy. It was the Hampstead graduate wife personified—smart but serious-minded, chic but with a social conscience. Articles poured off the Nova presses which will be rich source material for future social historians; they took on everything that seemed then revolutionary and has now become conventional wisdom: Holloway—and why it should be pulled down; race relations—what was the matter. The need for reform of the laws pertaining to homosexuality, abortion and divorce. Illiteracy. The squeezing of the middle class. Breast cancer. Adultery, and why the Other Woman isn't always in the wrong.

Yet what happened to Nova—whose top circulation was around 150,000, and whose present circulation is around the 40,000 mark—was that to a certain extent its thunder was stolen by the ruthless march onwards of the permissive society. When Nova started it seemed incredibly daring: since then other magazines have little by little moved in on its natural market, and proved even more daring.

EVENING STANDARD

Quebec

THE OTHER LANGUAGE: The Quebec provincial government proposed rules yesterday to implement the controversial Official Language Act in such a way that not even a demonstrator could carry a placard printed only in English.

The signs would have to be in French or in both French "and another language."

Although the regulations are aimed at curtailing the use of English, they consistently refer to "another language" as the alternative to French.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

Tripoli

LINGUA FRANCA: *Travellers to Libyan airports are being returned to their point of departure because their passports do not suit Col. Gaddafi, President of Libyan Revolutionary Council.*

Hundreds have been sent back despite valid entry visas, because their passports and vaccination certificates were not printed in Arabic. Of six British passengers aboard a Caledonian Airways plane, which arrived in Tripoli from Britain on Tuesday, five were sent back. The sixth was an oil company executive on business with the Libyan Government.

The same rule has been applied to Germans, Hungarians, Yugoslavs and even Algerians. An Algerian diplomat said the Algerian consul in Tripoli was sent back to Algiers on Tuesday when he returned from leave with a diplomatic passport printed in French.

Others had vaccination certificates printed on behalf of the World Health Organisation in English and French.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

GOOD NEIGHBOURS: It has come to our attention that in the Original Editions gallery of the British Museum (East Wing, entrance floor) the curator has chosen to juxtapose "Mein Kampf" and "Interpretations of Dreams"—Hitler and Freud share too cosily the right half of a display case.

We understand the curator's problem: where to place "Mein Kampf" so it will not offend the admirers of a companion volume, or do violence to the latter?

May we be constructive and suggest that you remove the Freud volume for placement elsewhere, and substitute the good Dean Swift's "Gulliver's Travels", opened at the pages describing the Yahoos? Hitler was the prime Yahoo of his time, and Dean Swift would not mind the curator thus commenting editorially and silently.

THE TIMES

London

WHEN IN ROMANY: *At Tuesday's High Court hearing gipsies in the public gallery protested when Emma Holland was referred to as "Diddly." Counsel said he understood the name was an "insulting term in Romany language" and went on to refer to her as Emma.*

But yesterday "Diddly" was used scores of times and neither gipsies nor counsel could explain outside the court why there had been an overnight change of heart.

Although no standard dictionary gives a meaning to the word some gipsies said they thought it was a term used for a gipsy believed not to be a true Romany.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

SPELLINGG BEEE: PHS told us of his visit to Britanny (and subsequently suggested that he had been rapped over the knuckles for saying so). Imagine my concern, therefore, when I read Reuter's report that a priest had been fined for bathing in the nude on a beach in Britany. I fled to more literate pastures and opened V. S. Pritchett's "Midnight Oil", to find him referring (p. 58, Penguin edition) to a holiday in Brittanny. My confidence is shaken. Sir, where is this place?

THE TIMES

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The Journal of the Chesterton Society

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"Chesterton as an Edwardian Novelist"
by John Batchelor, Ph.D. (Cantab.) of the University of Birmingham.

"A Lawyer's View of Chesterton"
by John R. Cartwright, the former Chief Justice of Canada.

"The Formation of the Distributist Circle"
by Jay P. Corrin, Ph.D. (University of Boston), American historian and student of Chesterton's social and political views and their impact on twentieth-century thought.

"Patterns in Chesterton's Style"
by David Derus, Ph.D. (Yale), Chesterton specialist and Chairman of the Department of English at the University of San Francisco.

"Chesterton in the Soviet Union"
by Moscow Critic, Elena Guseva.

"Chesterton's Unpublished Teen-Age Writings"
by Leo Hetzler, Ph.D. (Cornell), a specialist in Chesterton's early and unpublished works.

"Chesterton in Poland"
by Andrzej Jarosyński, lecturer in Comparative Literature at the Catholic University in Lublin, Poland.

"Chesterton and German Naturalism"
by Christina Keck, Chairman of the Department of Germanic Studies, Purdue University, Indiana.

"Chesterton and T.S. Eliot"
by Russell Kirk, author of *The Conservative Mind, Eliot and His Age, The Roots of the American Order,* etc.

"Chesterton in Canada"
by Edmund McCorkell, C.S.B. former President of the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto, Canada.

"The Origins of Chesterton's Medievalism"
by Marshall McLuhan, Director of the Centre for Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto.

"Aspects of Chesterton's Humour"
by George Purnell, Professor of English Literature at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada.

"An Everlasting Man"
by Maurice B. Reckitt, author, Director of *G.K.'s Weekly,* former editor of *Christendom* and colleague of Chesterton and T.S. Eliot.

"Chesterton in Japan"
by Professor Kasumi Yamagata, editor of *G.K. Chesterton: Selected Essays* and Professor of English Literature at Ferris Women's College in Yokohama, Japan.

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— Gregory Macdonald, deputy-editor of *G.K.'s Weekly,* and former Director of the Central European Service of the B.B.C.
— Francois Rivière, French writer and radio critic, *France-Culture* (O.R.T.F.).
— Sir Henry Slesser, associate of Chesterton, and historian of the British Trade Union movement and the Liberal Party.
— Freda Spencer, Chesterton's secretary, 1914 - 1916.
— John Sullivan, Chesterton bibliographer and editor of *G.K. Chesterton: A Centenary Appraisal.*

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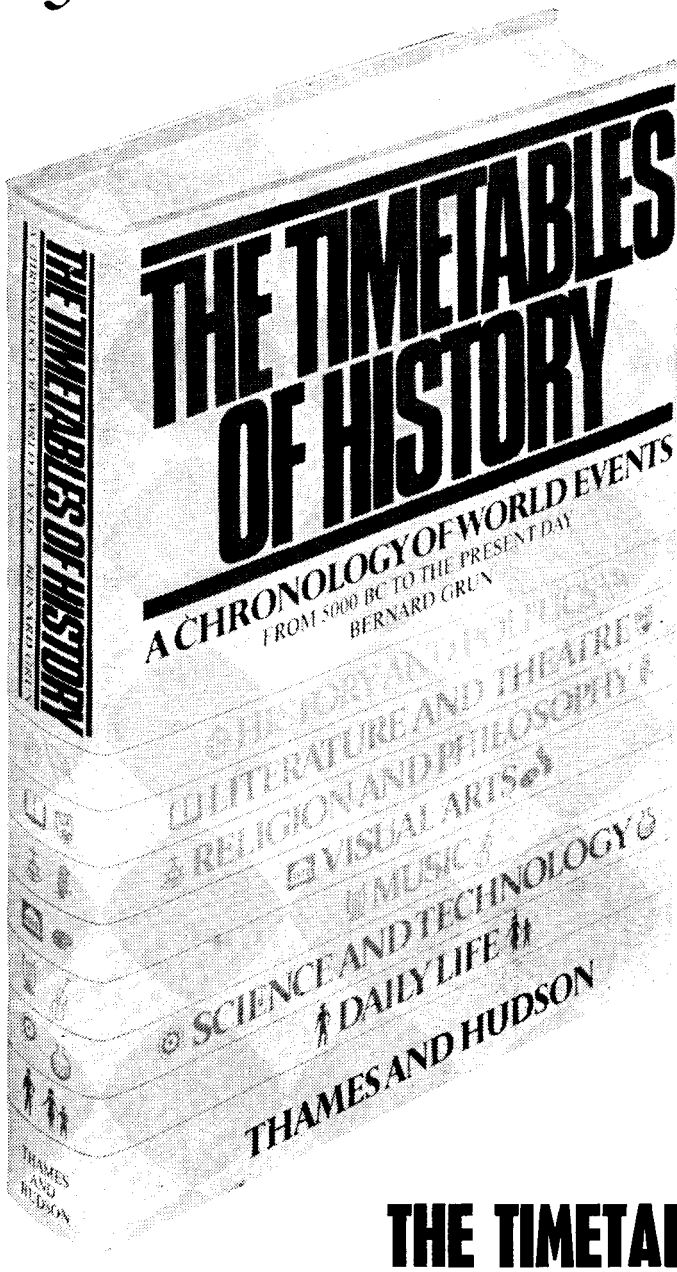

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